



FORT SMITH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A Plan for the Future of Our City!

Adopted

Planning Commission: October 8, 2002

Board of Directors: November 5, 2002

RESOLUTION NO. R-258-02

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE
FORT SMITH COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF CITY DIRECTORS OF THE CITY OF
FORT SMITH, ARKANSAS THAT:

WHEREAS the Mayor and Board of City Directors recognized the need for a
comprehensive development plan to guide the growth and progress of the City of Fort Smith,
and;

WHEREAS the Mayor and Board of City Directors decided to meet this need through the
development of a comprehensive planning process with the goal of involving all groups and
individuals within the community, and;

WHEREAS this process has resulted in the creation of a Comprehensive Development
Plan document for the City of Fort Smith;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of City Directors hereby adopt
this document as the official Comprehensive Development Plan for the City of Fort Smith.

This Resolution adopted this 5th day of November, 2002.

APPROVED:

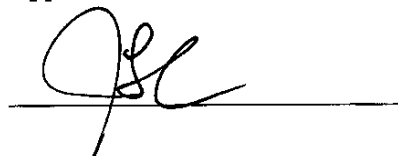


Mayor

ATTEST:

Cindy Remler
City Clerk

Approved as to Form



Acknowledgements

Board of Directors 1999-2002

Ray Baker- Mayor
Nan Bartlett
Gary Campbell
Joe Davis
Rick Parrish
Ken Pevehouse
Ken Pyle
Ben Shipley

Planning Commissioners 1999-2002

David Armbruster
Dr. Randy Bridges
Darrel Cunningham
Lawrence A. Devero
Susan Floyd
Steve Griffin
Jack Grober
Pat Kelley
Lisa Mathies
Robert J. Mulson, Jr.
Mary Lou Pointon
Ronald W. Rouse
Dr. Athena F. Russell
Lynn Snider

Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee 2000-2002

Mike Blaylock
Bob Bradford
Debbie Findley
John Fisher
Cole Goodman
Carter Hunt
Eileen Kradel
Pat Mickle
Paul Rainwater
Cinda Rusin
Sam Sicard Jr.

City of Fort Smith Planning/ Zoning

Gould Evans Goodman Associates, LC
Kansas City, Missouri

*Sincere thanks to all other organizations and participants throughout the
planning process.*

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This document is the City of Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan, created during 2000-2002 and adopted by the Planning Commission on October 8, 2002 and by the Board of Directors November 5, 2002. It is the first Comprehensive Plan developed and adopted by the City, and was funded through City revenue.

The Comprehensive Plan is a guide to decision making for City staff, and elected and appointed officials. It is a working document and will be reviewed, amended and updated as needed, and as elements of the plan are implemented.



SECTION I

Introduction

SECTION I

Introduction

The Comprehensive Plan is primarily a physical plan for the growth and development of the city over the next 20 years. It is designed to guide the City's day-to-day activities within the context of a long-range future vision, so that actions occur in a coordinated, efficient, and effective way.

While Fort Smith has had long range plans within government departments, and has a comprehensive development code (zoning, subdivision and building regulations) in place, the City has never adopted a comprehensive plan that combines all aspects of the community's development. The Fort Smith Board of Directors recognized this

need during a January 1999 planning retreat. In October of 1999, the Fort Smith Board of Directors, Planning Commissioners and the City Staff held a retreat that concluded with the authorization to begin the comprehensive planning process. The retreat identified 27 community issues that needed to be addressed.

Factors That Stimulated The Need For A Plan Included:

- Fort Chaffee de-militarization and subsequent planning, development and negotiated annexation of 7,000 acres of land on the southeastern edge of the City.
- Development of tourism and service industries around the Convention Center which opened in 2001.
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) initiatives and investment of more than a million dollars a year.
- The major downtown and riverfront initiatives that led to funding and development of the Convention Center and Riverfront Pavilion and Amphitheater.
- A strong and active CBID - Central Business Improvement District - ready to act and needing an overall plan for the downtown.
- A Chamber of Commerce that works to keep the economy strong, and through those efforts, the land use, traffic and look of the City are affected.
- The need for a fully staffed parks and recreation department to serve growing demands, while seeing to the responsibilities of planning, maintaining and running programs, facilities and expansions.



Introduction

- Growing interest and activities by both the public and private sectors for infill and redevelopment of housing alternatives in the older, original sections of town.
- The evolution of Westark Community College into the University of Arkansas - Fort Smith, can and will change the dynamics and image of the City. This evolution will more directly effect the land surrounding it, and have impacts on the larger community as a partner in education, culture, arts, entertainment, and business activities.
- While history and historic preservation have long been valued by city residents, many structures, neighborhoods and historic cultural resources have been lost. A city policy and plan of action are needed to preserve the historic resources that remain.
- Zoning and land use decisions and actions have occurred on a case-by-case, ad hoc basis, leading to many incompatible activities and loss of land value for one or more neighboring parties. These actions have also led to the inability to plan appropriate infrastructure and transportation facilities.

The lack of focus or common direction of so many independent task forces, committees, institutions, individuals and organizations has not stopped movement forward. However, it has caused inefficient use of scarce resources, people working at cross purposes (often towards similar and compatible goals), higher risk development and investment, and constantly changing roles and responsibilities for city staff already overburdened with the day to day business of providing citizen services.

1.1 PURPOSE

The Comprehensive Plan provides goals, policies, and land planning principles for guiding the future development of the City. It is used to assist the Planning Commission, the Board of Directors and City Staff as they make decisions on land use and zoning issues, capital improvement programming, transportation, and coordination efforts with other jurisdictions and agencies. It also serves as a guide to creating the future Fort Smith envisioned by the community as a whole.

Arkansas municipalities have "the power to adopt and enforce plans for the coordinated, adjusted, and harmonious development of the municipality" (A.C.A 14-56-402). In addition, they shall "promote, in accordance with present and future needs, the safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the citizens."

Among the specific issues that a city's plans may address to accomplish these goals are:

- "Efficient economic development;
- Appropriate and best use of land;
- Convenient traffic circulation of people and goods;
- Safety from fire and other dangers;
- Distribution of population;
- Adequate public utilities and facilities; and,
- Wise and efficient expenditures of funds." (A.C.A. 14-56-403(b))

The Plan Is:

Long-range: addressing future needs, while taking into account short-range, or current issues.

General: showing the general location, character, desired community improvements, development patterns, and the relationship of these elements.

Comprehensive: addressing the physical, social and economic factors affecting the future development of the community.

Living: Through land use ordinances, budgetary activities, and other legal and policy actions, the Plan will be implemented. As the City changes and priorities shift, the Plan may be adjusted so that it remains "living" or dynamic in nature reflecting the evolving City vision.



Public Participation

1.2 PROCESS

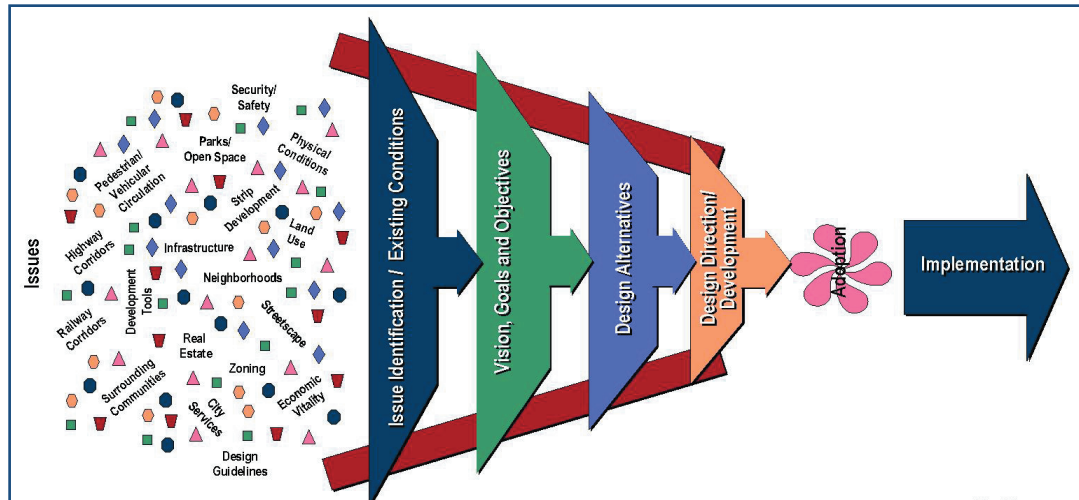
In 2001, a broad based citizen oriented Steering Committee was appointed by the City Directors to work with consultants and staff in developing the first comprehensive plan for the city. Members were asked to give their time to this effort based on many factors:

- diverse representation in perspective, experiences and neighborhoods,
- past and current participation and dedication to the community,
- being results oriented, and,
- their demonstrated ability to listen, be fair and open minded and reach consensus.

Orientation of the Steering Committee began in April 2001. The Committee met on the third Saturday of each month between April 2001 and October 2002. They followed a basic process of: information gathering; issue identification; goal setting; exploring alternative solutions; developing a preferred plan alternative; and, mapping out obstacles and steps to implement the plan.

1.2 PROCESS

Planning Process



Early on the Steering Committee reached consensus on the issues they would like to see the city and this plan address:

- Transportation and the current Street Plan
- Access and uses along the river
- Neighborhood revitalization and preservation improvements
- Commercial corridor development and improvements
- Downtown revitalization and Convention Tourism
- Historic Preservation
- Fort Chaffee Annexation
- City / County planning coordination
- Parks and open space planning
- Coordinated economic development
- Pedestrian and bicycle circulation
- Increased housing opportunities
- Creating a Vision and “Look” for Fort Smith
- Controlled (orderly) growth
- Annexation Policy and Procedures
- Adequacy of the current zoning code
- Development of Urban Design Standards
- Street and drainage improvement plans
- The provision of municipal services inside and outside of the city

It was decided early in the Spring of 2001, that community input and support were critical to both their comfort in proceeding with their efforts, as well as ensuring that they had community consensus and support for their ideas and issues of concern. A very aggressive effort was made, beginning with the summer concert series to get citizen input.

Introduction

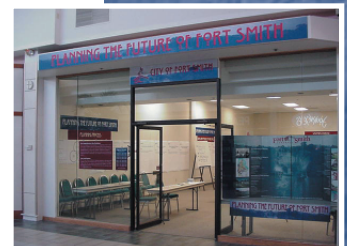
More than 100 cards and comments were received through outreach events and from library input boxes placed in all City libraries. Steering Committee members spoke at organizational meetings, and the City's *Focus* newsletter, sent to every household, continued to summarize concepts and progress. In the fall it was decided that a store front would provide a constant opportunity for people to participate on an on-going basis. From November 2001 through February 2002, storefront open houses were held, and public service announcements invited participation. Between the start of the planning process in April 2001, through the Summer of 2002, more than 100 meetings and presentations were held (see appendix for full listing). The Comprehensive Plan is a reflection of this extensive public process.



*Steering Committee
Work session*

1.3 PLAN SUMMARY

The Plan is organized around the major issues, goals and policies developed through this process. Where ever possible a numbering system has been used for easy reference, however in most cases the numbering system does not indicate a priority ranking, unless indicated. Section 2 is devoted to the conditions that exist in the city today (2000-2002), and it establishes benchmarks that the subsequent sections of the Plan will address. While this is primarily a physical plan document, the social and economic aspects of the City are addressed to some extent, with Section 2 outlining the social and economic make-up of the City at the time of the 2000 Census.



Storefront - Central Mall

Section 3 outlines the thought process and investigations into alternative growth and development scenarios that the Steering Committee went through in order to establish the preferred Plan Framework. This is included so that an understanding of the values and alternative scenarios that the City has to choose from can be referenced.

Section 4 is devoted to the Plan Framework, and the policies and recommended actions that will make the City of Neighborhoods a reality. This section is broken into the main goals and issues that the Plan is focused on resolving. This is the heart of the document and establishes the context for Section 6 on Plan implementation.



*Storefront Open house -
Central Mall*

Section 5 focuses on specific land areas of concern and change; the downtown, the riverfront, development of Fort Chaffee and land outside of the existing city limits, the Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ).

Section 6 is the action section of the Plan. It sets forward recommended actions, a generalized time frame and areas of responsibility. Through the Priorities Matrix, direction is given to implement the City of Neighborhoods vision for Fort Smith.



SECTION 2

Fort Smith Today



SECTION 2

Fort Smith Today

2.1 THE CITY

The City of Fort Smith, Arkansas is located in western Arkansas, on the Arkansas River, on the northeastern Oklahoma border. Surrounded by the Ozark National Forest, the development of the city has been greatly influenced by physical and man-made boundaries, and today it covers over 60 square miles of land. The northern edge of the city is defined by the Arkansas River, the western edge drawn by the state border with Oklahoma, and the eastern edges defined by the City of Barling and Fort Chaffee Military Base. The city can only grow to the south and southeast.

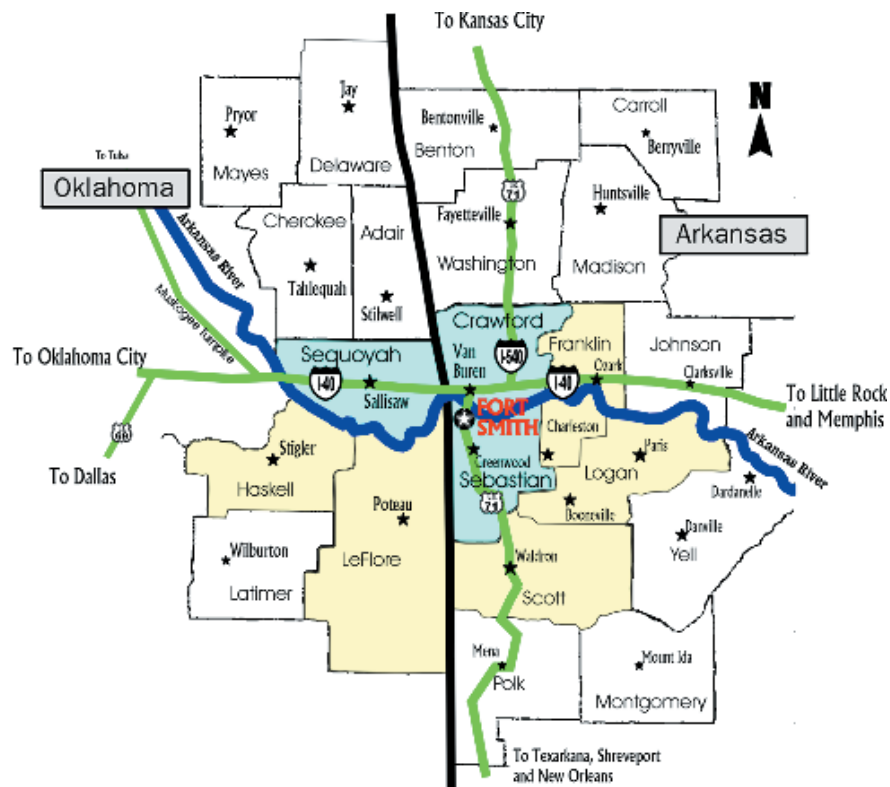
The location of Fort Smith on the Oklahoma border, between Tulsa and Little Rock, has insured that it remains the cultural and service center for a trade area of nine counties. As the second largest city in Arkansas, located more than 100 miles from another city of comparable size, the city provides entertainment, employment, shopping, medical, educational and transportation services to the larger region.

Fort Smith is an economic region that employs more than 100,000 people, more than actually reside within the city limits (80,000). With strong and growing region-

al medical institutions, the University of Arkansas - Fort Smith and expanding industries, the region is expected to continue to grow. A large percentage of Fort Smith and Sebastian County's work force commute from Oklahoma and the surrounding counties. While the city has maintained a strong employment base and remains the economic engine of a large geographic region, job opportunities in stable mid and high income fields and those requiring advanced degrees are not plentiful.

The city is well served by all modes of transportation, road, rail, water and air. Interstate 40, the main east-west highway serving western Arkansas, passes just north of Fort Smith on the northern side of the Arkansas River. I-540 follows a general north/south direction through eastern Fort Smith, connecting with I-40 and US Highway 71, the major north-south roadway of northwestern Arkansas. A number of rail lines continue to actively serve the thriving industries of Fort Smith, and the Fort Smith Regional Airport provides daily private and commercial flights.

The Fort Smith Region



Brief History

The City of Fort Smith has a rich history, At the beginning of the 19th century Arkansas Native American Tribes and nomadic fur traders were the predominant inhabitants of this uncharted land. Very little changed until early in the century when the United States purchased Arkansas from France with the Louisiana Purchase.



By 1817 a small fort was established on the high bluff overlooking the junction of the Arkansas and Poteau rivers. The small fort was originally built to promote peace between the warring Osage and Cherokee Indian tribes. It was named Fort Smith, in honor of General Thomas Smith , the region's military commander.



A small border town began to grow around the army post. The town soon became known as "the gateway between 'civilization' and the untamed West." The location of Fort Smith gave rise to some of our country's most memorable and tragic events, including the Forty-Niners, several Civil War skirmishes, the "Trail of Tears," and the settlement of the West.

In 1819 the Arkansas Territory was carved out of the Louisiana Purchase. Seventeen years later, in 1836, the Arkansas Territory

became the 25th state in the Union. A few years later (1842) Fort Smith became an incorporated town.

The gold rush put Fort Smith in a great position as the start of the main southern trail to the west. Soon Fort Smith became a supply depot for the west, and businesses sprung up to cater to would-be settlers passing through. By 1850, almost 1,000 people called Fort Smith home. The Civil War left its mark on the town with more than 1,500 unknown Union and Confederate soldiers buried in the Fort Smith National Cemetery.

As a bustling western town, it attracted many drifters, and Indian raids on settlers were not infrequent. Bordered by "Indian Territory" (Oklahoma) to the west, the region became a perfect refuge for criminals and outlaws, causing havoc on nearby Fort Smith. Judge Isaac C. Parker is credited with cleaning up the community and bringing back law and order. He served the area for 21 years, from 1875-1896, strictly enforcing and creating laws, earning the name the "Hanging Judge". His actual courtroom has been restored as part of the Fort Smith National Historic Site.

For an in depth history of the the City there are several excellent books available, including "The History of Fort Smith," J. Fred Patton, "Fort Smith," William J. Butler, and "Fort Smith, Little Gibraltar on the Arkansas," by Edwin C. Bearss and Arrell M. Gibson.

Government Organization

The town was first organized in 1840, and became incorporated in 1842. In 1967, the City Administrator form of government was established. The city's governing body follows a basic council/manager form of government, with the elected body comprised of an eight (8) member Board of Directors, the Mayor and seven (7) directors. Three of the directors are elected at large and four are elected from four equally populated wards. In addition to the Board of Directors there are 36 volunteer boards and commissions that serve as advisory bodies to the Board.

The Planning Commission serves by appointment on matters specifically pertaining to land planning and development and is comprised of nine members serving for three (3) year staggered terms. The purpose of the Planning Commission is to prepare a development plan for the City, to receive and make recommendations on public and private proposals for development, and to prepare and administer planning regulations. They are authorized to prepare and adopt a land use plan, community facilities plan, a master street plan and other plans as needed that affect the general welfare of the City. This body has the responsibility for overseeing the implementation of this plan.

The City is a full service city, organized into five line services divisions under the City

Administrator and two Deputy Administrators:

- Police Services,
- Fire Services,
- Operation Services,
- Management Services, and,
- Development Services.

Each department has on-going plans and work programs, with important issues that need to be incorporated and considered in the long-range physical plan for the city.

Police Services include patrol operations, criminal investigations, public parking, animal control and traffic and emergency response. The city employs more than 150 staff and operates out of one central station located downtown.

- As development continues to the south and east, a second full service police station is warranted.
- The City's radio communications system is 20 years out of date and the tornado siren warning system is 30 years out of date. Both of these communication systems are important to the safety of residents and will be reviewed and replaced in the next few years.
- Foreign language training has become increasingly important for all officers.
- Demands for bicycle patrols and neighborhood watch programs have continued to increase.

Section 2 - Fort Smith Today

Fire Services include prevention activities, suppression, emergency medical and rescue and the arson task force and its investigations. The city has 10 fire stations, more than 128 firefighters and officers on staff that respond to more than 6,000 calls per year. The City maintains a Class 2 fire rating.

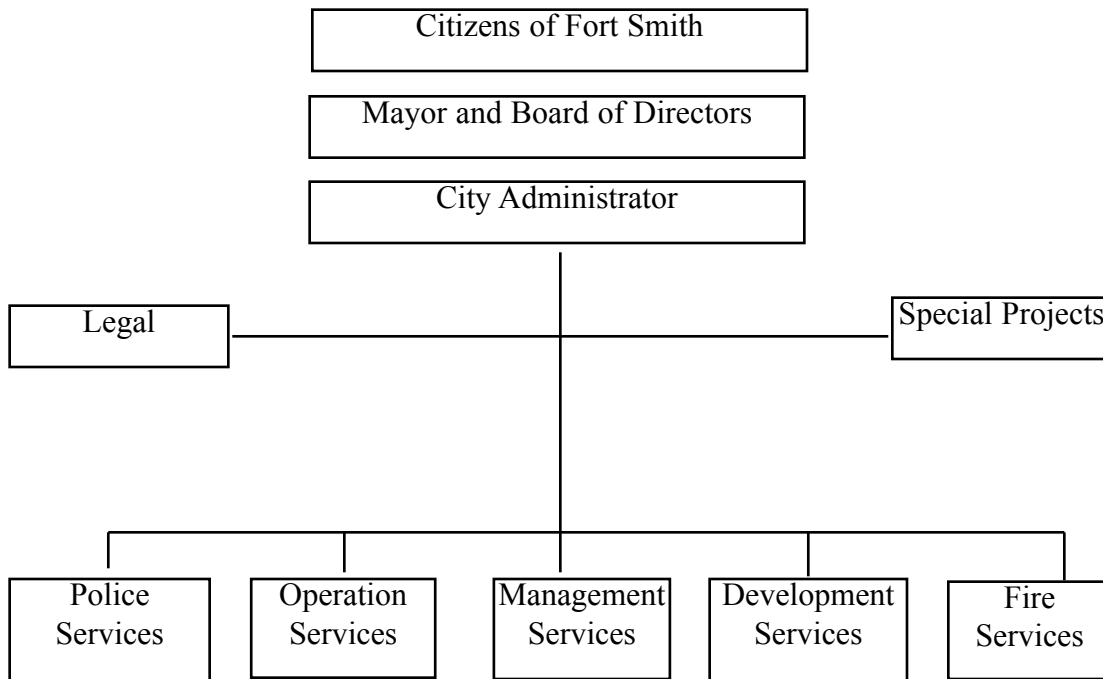
- The response times for the 10 stations can vary by a minute. Maintaining and improving emergency response times becomes very important as the city grows to the south.
- Improving coordination with code enforcement in fire prevention and suppression has become increasingly important.

Operation Services is one of the more diverse city divisions including; streets and traffic control; water supply and delivery and wastewater collection and treatment facilities; parks and recreation; sanitation services including recycling facilities; and transit operations. With more than 481 miles of sanitary sewer line, 576 miles of water supply lines, and 23 city parks to maintain, this division works at maintaining and improving the infrastructure of the city.

- Fort Smith began efforts to develop an additional water supply through the expansion of Lake Fort Smith as far back as 1991. These efforts are still underway with construction of the facility projected for completion in 2005.

- A Wastewater Management Plan was adopted in December 1999 and the recommendations from this document serve as a guide to capital improvements programming in the city on an on-going basis.
- A Storm Water Management Plan, in order to meet EPA Phase II requirements, is being undertaken, with the city needing to be compliant in 2003. This plan will outline Best Management Practices that coincide with many of the policies outlined in this plan.
- The city landfill will be expanded with the conveyance of 412 acres from Fort Chaffee. This action will effectively enable the site to be permitted for up to 40 years. The current permit runs through 2012.
- The landfill operates an integrated facility covering: compost, household hazardous waste, steel and appliance recycling, gas recovery system (with Mac Steel and Owens Corning) with recycling conducted at a separate location.

City of Fort Smith Government Organizational Chart



Management Services includes the offices of the City Clerk and Citizen Action Center, the Human Resources and Budget and Finance departments as well as Management Information Systems. This is the administration arm of the city.

- The city budget is a five year document compiled each fiscal year. Each department and division outlines its accomplishments and up-coming work program.

Development Services includes Planning and Zoning, Engineering, Building Inspections, Code Enforcement and administration of the Community Development Block Grant program (CDBG). This division serves as the primary land planning and development office of the city.

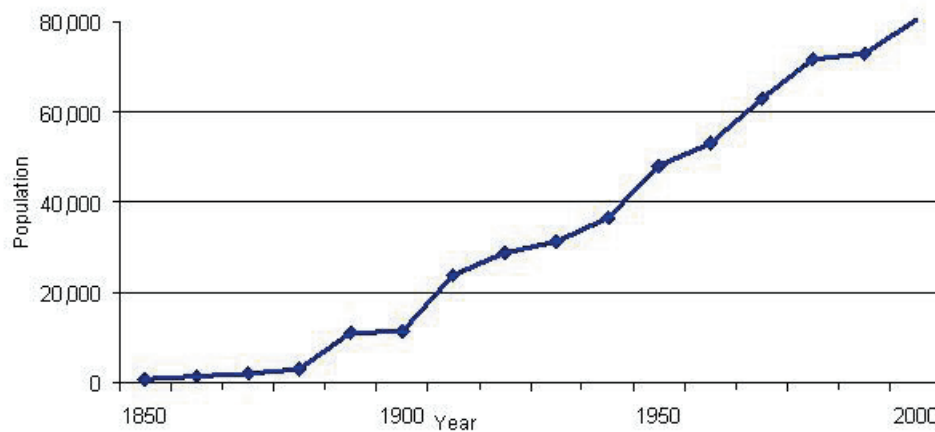
- The Comprehensive Plan will be primarily implemented through the efforts of this division.

2.2 DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

2.2.1 The People of Fort Smith

The City of Fort Smith enters the 21st century with a population of over 80,000. The 2000 Census reported Fort Smith growing by 10.3% since 1990, from 72,798 to 80,268 people. Since the beginning of the 20th century Fort Smith has experienced steady growth. Growth rates have varied between 2 % and 20% in any given decade. Between 1950 and 1980, growth continued at an average of 12% per decade, or 23,500 people during that 30 year period.

Population Trend, Fort Smith (1850-2000)



Although Fort Smith showed double-digit growth, it did not grow as fast as the U.S. as a whole, 13.2%, or the State of Arkansas at 13.7%. However, the surrounding counties of Crawford, Franklin and Sebastian showed rates far exceeding that of the City of Fort Smith at 25.3%, 19.3%, and 15.5% respectively.

The Fort Smith Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), Sebastian and Crawford Counties in Arkansas and Sequoyah County in Oklahoma grew by more than 25,000 people between 1990 and 2000, from 175,911 to 207,290. The four county Bi-State area (the regional Metropolitan Planning Organization area) adds LeFlore County in Oklahoma, and grew from 219,181 in 1990 to 254,218 in 2000, or 35,000 people. The regional trade area is considerably larger. It includes Scott, Franklin and Logan counties in Arkansas, as well as Haskell and LeFlore counties in Oklahoma, and serves roughly 313,000 people in 2000.

Fort Smith's experience is comparable to other Arkansas communities. The four largest cities in Arkansas, with the exception of Fayetteville, have experienced the same leveling of population since 1980 with growth occurring in the surrounding counties. Fayetteville, home to the University of Arkansas, grew by more than 37% between 1990 and 2000. Benton, Washington and Faulkner were the fastest growing counties in the state during the nineties.

Regional Population Growth 1990-2000

	1990	2000	% Change	Actual Change
Fort Smith, Arkansas	72,798	80,268	+10.3%	7,470
Sebastian County	99,590	115,071	+15.5%	15,481
Crawford County	42,493	53,247	+25.3%	10,754
Arkansas County Totals	142,083	168,318	+18.0%	26,235
Sequoyah County	33,828	38,860	+15.0%	5,032
LeFlore County	43,270	47,040	+9.0%	3,770
Oklahoma County Totals	77,098	85,900	+11.0%	8,802
Regional Totals	219,181	254,218	+16.0%	35,037

SOURCE: Census 2000

Population Projections for Fort Smith and the Region to 2025

Both the northwest and western portions of the state are expected to continue to grow at a faster rate than the state as a whole. The federally mandated transportation planning area is known as the Bi-State Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) or locally known as the Western Arkansas Planning and Development District (WAPDD). This planning area covers the four counties neighboring Fort Smith. The WAPDD projects the region to grow by more than 100,000 people, or more than 30%, from 254,218 people in 2000 to 356,435 by 2025. The City of Fort Smith is projected to absorb roughly a third of that growth, adding an additional 30,000 people for a 2025 population of 110,300. In this scenario, Sebastian County, outside of the City of Fort Smith, would gain more than 50,000 people in twenty years.

The MPO, or WAPDD, works with the state demographer and the state growth forecasts, and then assesses local trends and capacity (existing conditions) to absorb growth. For instance, the annexation of Fort Chaffee will effect the capacity of Fort Smith to absorb population and jobs. Changes to planning, zoning, and investment in infrastructure also will effect the cities capacity to grow.

These projections assume a city growth rate of 16% per decade or, 1.6% a year, exceeding previous growth rates of 10% or less per decade. It also assumes an average 20% growth rate per decade for Sebastian County as a whole, for an average growth rate of 2% per year, which exceeds the high rate of growth over the past decade of 16%.

Section 2 - Fort Smith Today

Much slower growth rates are assumed for neighboring Oklahoma Counties, from 11% total percent change between 1990 and 2000, to an average of 3% per decade between 2000 and 2025. This assumption was based on many factors. Prominent among them was the lack of infrastructure and known planned infrastructure investments.

Because anything can happen over the next 20 years, a range of growth figures is used to account for adjustments in the economy, migration and public and private actions. A simple extrapolation of past population growth yields a "low" projection and the state and MPO projections yields a "high" population total. The Oklahoma forecasts for 2020 and 2025, are extrapolations of past growth and are therefore higher than those projected by the MPO, indicated in the "high" column.

Fort Smith and MSA County Growth Projections to 2025

	2000	High 2020	Low 2020	High 2025	Low 2025
Fort Smith	80,268	106,000	95,208	110,300	98,943
Sebastian County	115,071	161,500	146,033	170,900	153,773
Crawford County	53,247	82,000	74,755	93,700	80,100
Arkansas Totals	168,318	243,500	220,788	264,600	233,873
LeFlore County	47,040	51,250	55,746	51,600	57,975
Sequoyah Co.	38,860	39,735	51,392	40,235	54,989
Oklahoma Totals	85,900	90,985	107,138	91,835	112,964
Regional Totals	254,218	334,485	327,926	356,435	346,837

SOURCE: WAPDD and Gould Evans Goodman

Age & Household Composition

Fort Smith's population age characteristics closely resemble those of America as a whole, with slightly higher percentages of the population in both the 0-4 age group and the over 65 groupings. The median age for both the country and Fort Smith in 2000 was 35.3. The U.S. reported 14.7% of the population as 62 years of age and over, compared to Fort Smith reporting 15.9% of its population in the same category.

Almost 25% of the population was under 18 years of age, with 40% of the population between the ages of 18 and 44, both cohorts mirror national statistics. The 45 to 64 age group represents more than 20% of the population, with slightly lower percentages in Fort Smith than in the U.S. as a whole.

In 2000, 32,898 households resided in the city limits. Of resident households, 36.3% were classified as non-family, a higher percentage than Arkansas, 29.8%, and the U.S. at 32%. This can be accounted for by the higher percentage of individuals living alone in Fort Smith, 30.7%, compared with 25.8% nationally and 25.6% in the state of Arkansas. Single-parent, female headed households make up 7.8% of all Fort Smith households, compared with 7.2% in the U.S. Whereas married couples with children at home composed 20.7% of households, compared with 23.5% in the U.S. and 22.7% in the State of Arkansas. Not surprisingly, average household and family size are both slightly smaller in Fort Smith than for the nation as a whole, at 2.4 and 2.54 respectively.

City of Fort Smith Racial Composition Change 1990-2000

	1990	2000	2000 Population Ages 5-18
White	87%	76.9%	64%
Black or African American	6.8%	8.6%	14%
Asian or Pacific Islander	4%	4.6%	7%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1%	1.7%	3.2%
Hispanic or Latino	1%	8.8%	11%
Other Race	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%

SOURCE: 2000 U.S. CENSUS & FORT SMITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Diversity

During the past 20 years, the population of Fort Smith has become more diverse. Since 1980, the white population has been declining, both in absolute numbers and as a percent, while the minority populations have increased. More than 9% of the 2000 population of Fort Smith was not born in the United States, and more than 12% of the population

speaks a language other than English at home. It was estimated that more than 6% of Fort Smith residents were not U.S. Citizens in 2000.

Population growth since 1980 can be attributed to growth in minority populations, both in-migration and new births.

Diversity

2000 Ethnicity Comparisons

	Fort Smith	Sebastian County	Arkansas	Oklahoma	U.S.
White	76.9%	82.0%	80.0%	76.2%	75.0%
Black or African American	8.6%	6.2%	15.7%	7.6%	12.3%
Asian or Pacific Islander	4.6%	3.5%	0.8%	1.4%	3.6%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.7%	1.6%	0.7%	7.9%	1.0%
Hispanic or Latino	8.8%	6.2%	3.0%	5.2%	12.5%

SOURCE: 2000 U.S. CENSUS

In 1980, 64,411 people were grouped as White, declining in 1990 to 62,790 or 87% of the total population. The 2000 Census shows this number dropping further to 61,798 people, or 77% of the City's population. The highest growth in the city's population has occurred in minority children, where the ethnic composition differs markedly from the city as a whole.

Between 1990 and 2000 Sebastian County, excluding Fort Smith, grew by over 30% or by 8,011 people. Of these 8,011 people, 88%, or 7,018, were White. Much of the Hispanic growth in Sebastian County has taken place in the City of Fort Smith. In 1990, the county recorded a Hispanic population of 1,362, only 330 did not reside in Fort Smith. In 2000 the Hispanic population increased to 7,710, only 662 of which did not reside in the city. Compared to county and state figures, Fort Smith has a greater total minority population is more comparable to the nation as a whole.

Housing

In 2000, the city was recorded as having 35,353 dwelling units, a gain of more than 2,300 since 1990. Diverse architectural styles provide a variety of housing types and neighborhoods for all income levels and preferences. With a rich history, the city retains many of its historic structures. As in most cities across the country, affordable housing is in demand.

More than 20% of Fort Smith's housing stock was constructed during the seventies, with slightly over 12% of the city's housing being provided in the last decade of the nineties. Single family detached housing makes up 65% of all units in the city, compared with 69% for the State of Arkansas and 60% for the nation as a whole. Mobile Homes make up 9% of all units, which is slightly higher than the national 7.6% and substantially less than all units in the state of Arkansas at almost 15%.

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With a higher percentage of single headed households it is not surprising that there are a significantly higher percentage of rental versus owner occupied units in the city. Nationally, roughly 66% of occupied housing is owner-occupied with 34% occupied by renters. In Fort Smith, 10% fewer households own their home, 56%, compared with Arkansas's 69.4% owner occupancy rate.

Many of the older residential areas of the city have experienced decline. In 2001, more than 40 properties were condemned. The tornado of 1996 contributed to the decline of some of these areas as it damaged or destroyed 1,949 homes in and around the downtown and the northside neighborhoods. Many neighborhoods have one or more of the following conditions:

- Poorly maintained and/or dilapidated housing
- Negative impacts of lighting, noise, smell, traffic, insufficient setbacks, lack of screening from trash and loading facilities from factories, industrial warehousing, and Intense retail and commercial activities
- Many neighborhoods do not have sidewalks or safe places to walk or ride a bike
- Absentee landlord rental properties that are insufficiently managed and maintained
- Conversion of single-family dwellings to boarding houses without regulation
- Parking violations on streets, sidewalks, yards and vacant lots
- Street drainage
- Vacant lots that are not maintained
- Overcrowding of existing housing units

Both the 1990 and 2000 Census revealed more than 30% of city census tracts as having conditions that would qualify Fort Smith for federal assistance in providing for those in need. Areas with concentrations of poverty, unemployment, low-income, female headed families, vacant or boarded-up housing, and housing in extreme disrepair were identified in application for federal funding. The city has received annual funds from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in excess of one million dollars since the seventies.

Each community that receives HUD funding is required to prepare a 3-5 year Consolidated Strategic Plan. The 2001-2005 Consolidated Plan specifies the appropriate use of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program funds, HOME Funds, the Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) and the Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS (HOPWA) program. It was developed to meet the statutory goals of providing decent housing; providing a suitable living environment; and, providing for expanded economic opportunities. Fort Smith administers these program funds through the Community Development Advisory Committee (CDAC), the Community Development Department and works with a variety of organizations to ensure the goals of the plan are met.



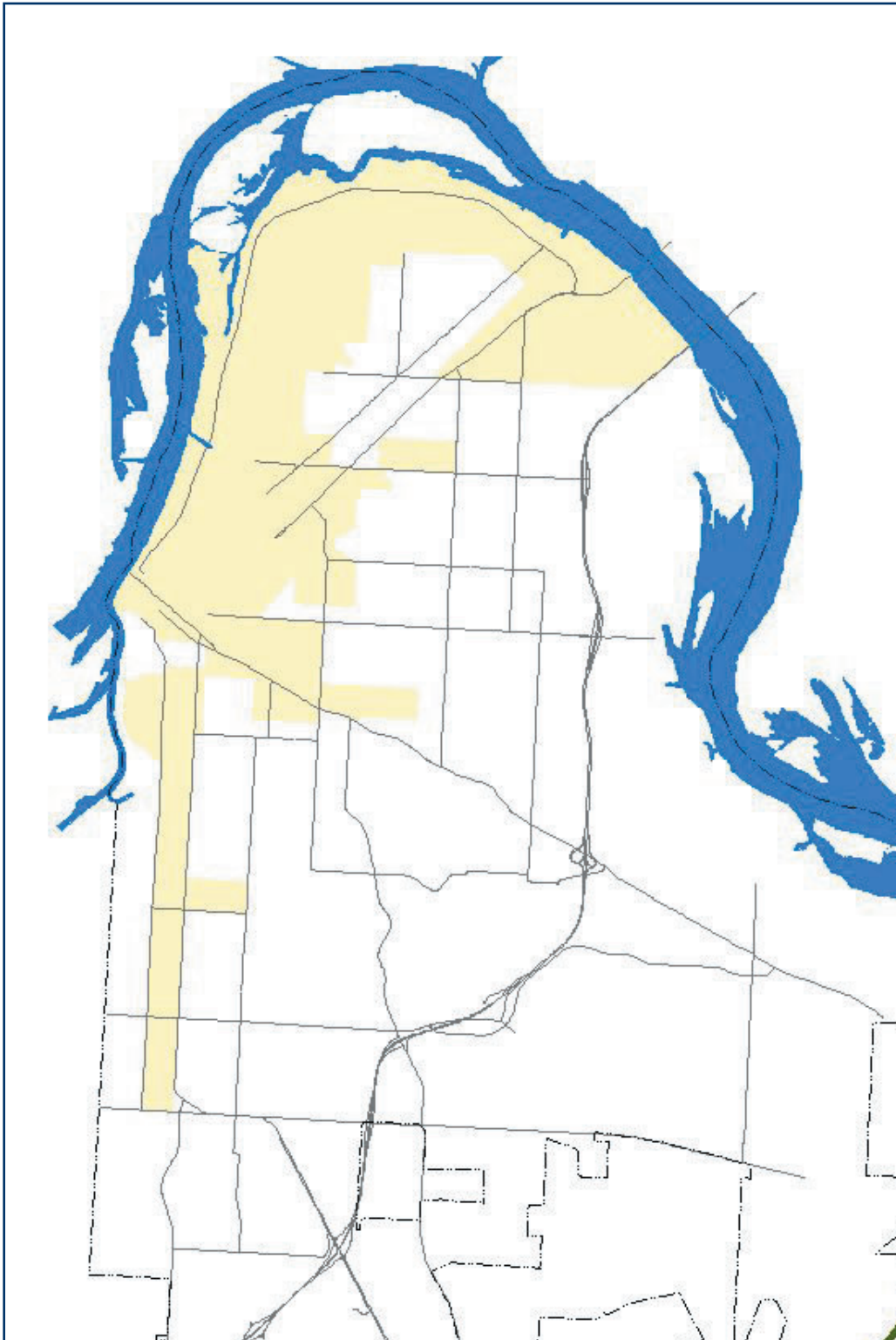
Housing in Fort Smith



Housing in Fort Smith

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CDBG Eligible Funding Areas



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Quick Census Facts 2000

Quick Census Facts 2000	Fort Smith	Arkansas	Oklahoma	United States
Median Age	35.3	36.0	35.5	35.3
Percent 65 & Over	13.7%	14.0%	13.2%	12.4%
Percent Family Households	63.7%	70.0%	68.7%	68.0%
<i>Married Couple Family</i>	47.1%	54.3%	53.5%	51.7%
<i>Female with children under 18</i>	7.8%	7.4%	7.0%	7.2%
Non-family Households	36.3%	29.8%	31%	31.9%
<i>Householder Living Alone</i>	30.7%	25.7%	26.7%	25.8%
Average Household Size	2.42	2.49	2.55	2.59
Percent Owner Occupied Dwelling	56.3%	69.4%	68.4%	66.2%
Per Capita Income	\$18,994	\$16,904	\$17,646	\$21,587
Median Household Income	\$32,157	\$32,182	\$33,400	\$41,994
Not a U.S. Citizen	6.8%	1.9%	2.5%	6.6%
Language other than English	12.0%	5.0%	7.4%	17.9%
Percent less than 9th grade education (25 years and older)	10.0%	9.4%	6.1%	7.5%
Percent Bachelor's degree or higher (25 years and older)	18.6%	16.7%	13.5%	24.4%
Percent School age population enrolled in grades 1-8	48.2%	46.1%	44.4%	43.9%
Percent of families in poverty, 1999	12.1%	12.0%	11.2%	9.2%
Percent of individuals in poverty, 1999	15.8%	15.8%	14.7%	12.4%
Gross rent 35% or more of household income, 1999	25.4%	26.7%	26.7%	28.5%

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU



University of Arkansas-Fort Smith

2.2.2 The Economy and Income

Employment

While population gains for the city have been small relative to the growth of the region, job growth has continued at a high rate, and accounts for most of the job gains in the region over the past 20 years. Throughout the last decade, total payroll jobs have averaged roughly 100,000 in the Fort Smith MSA. Unemployment has continued to be low (3.3% in 2001), and on average, lower than both the State of Arkansas (4.3% in 2001) and the country (5% in 2001) for the past decade.

As the major source of employment and services for surrounding communities, a large percentage of workers commute into Fort Smith from Oklahoma and neighboring towns and counties. The Fort Smith MSA recorded more than 102,000 of those jobs. A total of 53,000 Sebastian County residents (including Fort Smith) were employed in 2001, 36,634 of those employed were Fort Smith residents. This indicates that people residing outside of the County filled more than half of the jobs in Sebastian County.

residents of Fort Smith over the age 16 were employed in 2000, 85.8% as private wage and salary workers, 5% were self-employed and almost 9% were employed by a level of government. More than 11,000 people were 65 and older, and more than 10,000 people between 21 and 64 years of age had a stated disability. Labor force participation rates (population 16 years and older in the civilian work force) for the city in 2000 were higher than the state and lower than national rates at 62.4%, 60.3% and 63.4% respectively. Similarly, female labor force participation was higher than that for the State of Arkansas, 54.4%, and lower than the national, 57.5%, participation rate for women at 55.2%.

More than 10% of all non-agricultural jobs in Arkansas are located in the Fort Smith region. Light and heavy industry are major components of the local economy. Together, they make up over 30% of the employment in the region, almost double that of the national share of manufacturing employment. Major manufacturers have operations in the region, both inside and outside the City limits. Most of these companies have located large manufacturing plants that supply thousands of jobs for area residents. Six of the top ten employers are either light or heavy industry. The two largest employers, together provide more than 9,000 jobs.

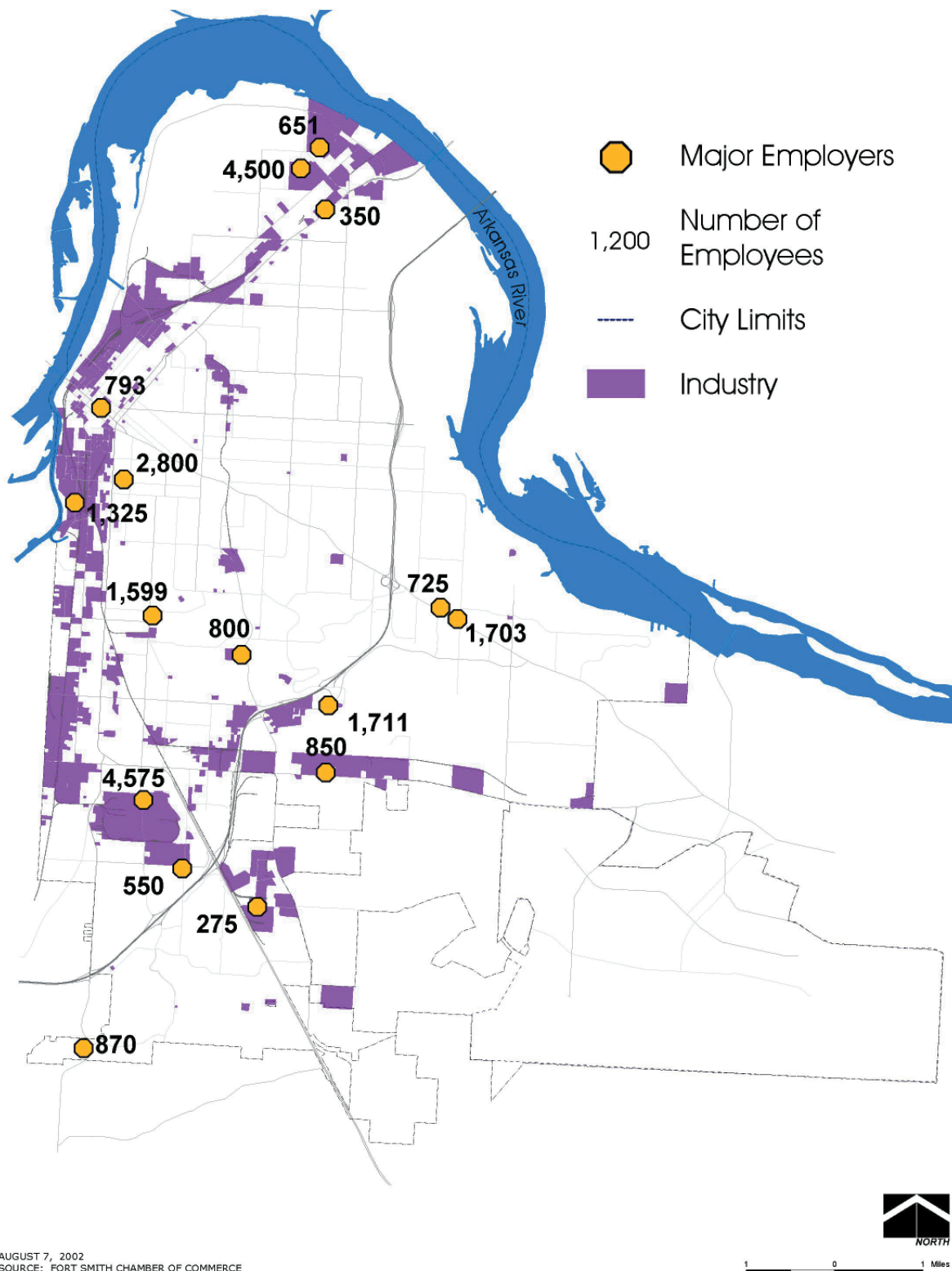
Of the 80,268 people residing in Fort Smith in 2000, 62,233 people were 16 years and older, of which 38,818 were considered to be in the labor force. More than 36,600

“...total payroll jobs have averaged roughly 100,000 in the Fort Smith MSA.”



Whirlpool Factory

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AUGUST 7, 2002
SOURCE: FORT SMITH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

SOURCE: FORT SMITH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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Fort Smith Employment Change 1990-2000 Compared with U.S.

Industry	1990 Employed	1990 Percent	2000 Employed	2000 Percent	2000 U.S. %
Ag, Forestry, Fisheries, Min.	650	1.9%	409	1.1%	1.9%
Construction	1,243	3.7%	1,760	4.8%	6.8%
Manufacturing, All Goods	9,412	27.7%	9,687	26.4%	14.1%
Transportation	1,564	4.6%	1,662	4.5%	5.2%
Communications/ Pub Util.	877	2.6%	1,662	2.6%	3.1%
Wholesale Trade	1,655	4.9%	1,525	4.2%	3.6%
Retail Trade	6,270	18.4%	4,145	11.3%	11.7%
Finance, Insur, Real Estate	1,547	4.6%	1,858	5.1%	6.9%
Business, Prof. Services	1,303	3.8%	2,341	6.4%	9.3%
Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation & Food	1,115	3.4%	2,648	7.2%	7.9%
Health & Ed. Services	5,307	15.6%	7,047	19.2%	19.9%
Other Prof. Services	1,886	5.5%	1,697	4.6%	4.9%
Public Administration	1,122	3.3%	915	2.5%	4.8%
Total	33,999	100%	36,634	100%	100%

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU



OK Industries

Occupations of Fort Smith residents became more diverse between 1990 and 2000, more closely resembling the composition of the work force of the country as a whole. The health and education sectors of the economy

have experienced the most gains in Fort Smith occupations between 1990-2000, from 15% to 19% of those employed. Business and professional services also

experienced significant change from 3.8% to 6.4% of employee composition, or more than 1,000 employees. Other sectors have experienced only slight percentage changes during the decade.

Occupations of Fort Smith Residents Compared with State and National

Occupations Census 2000	Fort Smith	Arkansas	Oklahoma	United States
Management Professional	28.7%	27.7%	30.3%	33.6%
Service	13.3%	14.1%	15.5%	14.9%
Sales and Office	24.3%	25.1%	26.6%	26.7%
Farming, Fishing, Forest	0.5%	1.5%	0.09%	0.7%
Construction, Extraction, Maintenance	7.8%	10.6%	11.3%	9.4%
Production, Transportation, Material Moving	25.4%	21.0%	15.4%	14.6%
	100%	100%	100%	100%

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

Income

As with Arkansas as a whole, personal incomes are lower in Fort Smith than national averages. However, with a significantly lower cost of living, these figures can be misleading. Fort Smith residents spend less of their income on housing, food, and services. The city offers a higher per capita income than the state, has a higher percentage of college graduates, a lower unemployment rate, and the same percentage of individuals and families in poverty as the State of Arkansas. The city and state recorded 12% of all families as being in poverty, compared with 9% of all families in the United States in 1999. Individuals in poverty, in the city and state, amounted to 15.8%, compared with 12.4% documented in the country as a whole.

Nationally, 7.5% of those 25 years and older had less than a 9th grade education, compared with 10% of Fort Smith residents and 9.4% of the state's population. Almost 25%

of the population nationally, aged 25 years and older, held a bachelor's degree or higher, compared with Fort Smith at 18.6% and the state population at 16.7%.

Another potential contributing factor to income variations and distributions, may be attributed to a high percentage of non-U.S. citizens (6.8% in 2000) residing in Fort Smith and a high percentage of people who speak a language other than English (12%) as their primary language. While nationally these figures are similar if not higher (6.6% and 17.9% respectively), for a relatively small city, these numbers are high and show concentrations of populations in the city relative to the state (1.9% and 5% respectively for the State of Arkansas). Traditionally these factors can limit potential earnings and job growth for work requiring highly skilled and educated workers.



2.3 PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

This section of the plan documents the existing characteristics of the land and its development. Both the natural environment and the built environment influence the future growth and development of the city. Existing public policy, through the exercise of zoning and subdivision regulations, the implementation of the Capital Improvements Program, and Voter Sales Tax Revenue streams dictate what the city can do to effect the land use, look, function and maintenance of the City's physical characteristics. Where applicable these elements have been included in describing the physical characteristics of the city.

The city offers rich natural vegetation and abundant waterways, ideal habitat for diverse and migrating bird species. The Mayor hosted his 5th annual Bird Sanctuary Conference in 2002, and local signs announce that Fort Smith is a bird sanctuary. Nevertheless, there are no plans or policies to reflect this widely held community value.

2.3.1 Environment

The natural environment is a major source of enjoyment for the citizens of the city and region. While the most prominent environmental features and issues of the City are water and its associated drainages, there are other natural features that have in the past, and will in the future, influence land development. These elements are not addressed in detail in this plan, but should be considered in all future planning.

- Mining and natural gas deposits are located in and around the city, and state law allows active wells to occur in any zone including residential neighborhoods.
- The hydrology of the area, in addition to inadequate storm sewer drainage systems in many parts of the city, makes stormwater events a major source of non-point source pollution and flooding.
- Agriculture and farming are still active uses along the Arkansas River Valley and are present in the city and region today.
- The geology of the region, and low-quality groundwater, makes it difficult for rural development on well and septic systems to expand much more in Sebastian County. The South Sebastian Water District supplies low pressure, low demand water to the rural areas of the county, but cannot supply enough water pressure for emergency service or more urban densities.

Waterways and Flooding Issues

The city location affects several statewide watersheds, the Upper Arkansas River Watershed being of primary concern. Watersheds are areas of land that catch rain or snow and drain to specific marshes, streams, rivers, lakes or groundwater. They are large natural drainage systems that have become the focus of national and state water quality and restoration efforts. Scientists have recognized the contributions of upstream actions on conditions in the watershed downstream. There are seven watersheds forming around the creek system running through the city, each with sub-basins: Little Massard, No Name, May Branch, Mill Creek, Sunnymede, Oak Park and the Spivey and Massard Creeks.

In 1985, the voters of Fort Smith passed a one cent sales tax with the proceeds designated for street, bridge and related drainage improvements. With a funding source in place, the city had several isolated drainage studies performed and a Stormwater Management Plan was completed in 1993. The 1993 plan and those studies identified numerous neighborhood and sub-basin problems and solutions to localized flooding issues.

The one cent sales tax revenue stream provides the funding for perform the design and construction of numerous neighborhood and basin wide drainage improvement. These facilities have ranged from small storm sewer systems to manor channelization projects and storm water detention ponds. Although structure and street flooding has been reduced significantly throughout the city since these projects have been underway, an extensive array of stormwater flooding problems remain.

The 1990 Clean Water Act contains provisions for the EPA (Federal Environmental Protection Agency) to regulated stormwater runoff from urbanized areas. Phase I of

these regulations were applicable to cities with population in excess of 100,000 and became effective in the mid-1990's. Phase II of these regulations are applicable to cities with populations less than 100,000, and will be effective March 2003. The state regulatory agency, the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) will help cities throughout the state figure out how best to meet the Federal Regulations. Preventive and "Best Management Practices" will be the cornerstone of these policies



Fort Smith Stream

The amount of impervious surface, land grading, erosion control, on and off site retention ponds, vegetation, building techniques, regular street and parking lot cleaning, and adequate filtration can address many stormwater runoff pollution problems. These practices apply to both public and privately owned land. Revisions to the subdivision and zoning codes, that address drainage issues more thoroughly are therefore needed.

Fort Smith Watersheds



NOT TO SCALE



2.3.2 Land Use and Zoning

The City of Fort Smith is comprised of roughly 54 square miles of land. The annexation of Fort Chaffee lands in 2002 added approximately 6,990 acres of land, or almost 11 square miles, to bring the total city land area to roughly 65 square miles.

The historic fort city developed around the river trade and stage coach routes. Agriculture and farming are still active uses along the Arkansas River Valley and are present in the city today. Historically, individual landowners and businesses have determined the land use pattern of the city. Over time, without a publicly adopted Comprehensive Plan, the city has developed in an uncoordinated, haphazard way, as have many other areas of the country. Inadequate infrastructure provision, traffic, and insensitive adjacent land uses and design are the result.

Zoning

Zoning is a legal exercise of government police power created to provide for the "public health, safety, convenience or general welfare " of a community. Most communities in the United States have zoning applied to the land. Zoning directs land development with regard to use, height, bulk, intensity (or density), character and location of structures and facilities. All land in Fort Smith is zoned under Chapter 27 of the Municipal Code. Zoning consists of both language, the ordinance, and a map depicting the zoning districts as they apply to property in the city. All zones generally have a purpose or intent designed to address needs within a community. *The overall intent of zoning is to:*

- *stabilize and protect property values;*
- *protect public facility investments such as streets, schools and utilities from being overburdened due to over population;*
- *provide appropriate locations for each land use that is properly related to infrastructure and compatible neighboring uses;*
- *separate or otherwise address conflicting or non-compatible land uses;*
- *ensure adequate parking and loading space off of public rights-of-way;*
- *improve living conditions and fire protection by requiring adequate light, air and open space; and,*
- *protect residents from noise, air and light pollution.*

Zoning

In order for a zoning ordinance and map to not be considered arbitrary, it needs to conform to an overall plan for the city, or a comprehensive plan. Arkansas statutes establish that the adoption and filing of a land use plan is needed before preparing and adopting a zoning ordinance {A.C.A.14-56-416 (a)(1)}. This city has not had a comprehensive plan in which to determine the validity of its decisions on granting zoning and variance decisions. The zoning map, and the creation of zoning districts, has not been made with an overall plan of the city in mind. The adoption of this plan establishes a need to connect the zoning code and map with the comprehensive plan, and in so doing meet the Arkansas statutes.

Zoning Ordinance and Map Elements:

- location, height, bulk, number of structures and size of buildings;
- open space;
- lot coverage;
- density and distribution of population;
- uses of land, buildings and structures;
- off-street parking and loading;
- large scale districts of compatible uses;
- elimination of non-conforming uses; and,
- other health, safety and general welfare matters.

Fort Smith has a conventional Euclidean zoning ordinance, which is designed around three basic uses: residential, commercial and industrial. The code attempts to reduce the negative impacts of non-compatible uses through distance, not design. The city currently operates under 43 different zoning options, with 13 residential zones, 11 commercial zones and 10 industrial zones. There are nine additional special districts including transitional, historic, flood zone and the Phoenix Avenue Overlay District. Many of these districts differ by only one allowable use, or condi-

tional use, and do not offer markedly different purposes or character.

Without an overall plan, the existing zoning code and patterns have not been able to protect property values, and do not represent either current development patterns or a pattern of development for which the city is striving. Rewriting the current zoning code would serve to protect investments, preserve, and increase existing property values and neighborhoods and improve the function and attractiveness of commercial and employment areas.

Existing Land Use and Zoning

A land use inventory of the city was conducted in 2000. This work resulted in an existing land use map, in a GIS (Geographic Information System) format using a basic land use classification scheme. The acreage figures listed here, are from GIS calculations, and not from an actual acreage count from property records. In most cases these uses are accurate at the parcel level. All land uses are categorized by function and primary use. For example, while a structure may appear to be residential in character, if it is used for commercial or office uses, it will be counted as commercial or office. Zoning categories have been included in the land use descriptions so that a better understanding of the close relationship between land use and zoning can be seen.

Residential

Land uses in this category make up approximately 35% of all land in the city. This is typical of most cities of this size.

Single Family Residential

Single family residential use refers to a detached dwelling unit, occupied by one family or household. The unit resides on its own parcel and is the most common residential land use pattern in Fort Smith. More than 17 square miles, or roughly 11,244 acres, of city land is developed in this pattern.

Many neighborhoods have not developed in a single density or land use. Single-family residential, multi-family apartments and large home conversions to boarding houses and apartments are common in the older neighborhoods. On the northside of the city, the predominant zoning pattern is R-3-MF, which is defined as a high-density residential district, with a maximum of 24 dwelling units per acre. While the majority of the structures and subdivisions remain

in a single-family pattern, infill and redevelopment have occurred using the zoning under which the land legally sits. Other prominent zoning categories include, R-4-MF, and R-2-SF-DP and R-3-SF-DP low and medium density single-family and duplex dwellings.

Residential growth occurred outward from the downtown, in the northern portions of the city. The Belle Grove Historic District, has its own zoning district, H-1 and is located northeast of the downtown with properties dating back to 1800. The highest levels of disrepair and vacancy are in these neighborhoods. Areas north of Division Street and west of Midland Boulevard are identified in the Community Development Block Grant program for reinvestment.

Existing Land Use and Zoning

Medium Density Residential

Medium density residential use refers to attached dwelling units, which usually take the form of duplexes, townhomes, and four-plexes. Fort Smith has a number of zoning districts that provide for these uses. Medium density land use accounts for roughly 236 acres of land. Because of the nature of this type of use it is often more difficult to detect and map. In areas where zoning is in R-3-MF, while the neighborhood may be predominately single-family in nature, individual rooming houses and multi-family dwellings may not be counted in the map-



ping of large areas. This acreage figure, therefore, may be misleading and not indicative of the actual amount of land developed in this use.

Medium density units are usually built adjacent to each other, generally on one large parcel of land with one continuous style of architecture. Ideally, medium density residential development blends or merges architecturally, so that single family and multi-family units are designed together to create a harmonious residential neighborhood.

Multi-Family Residential

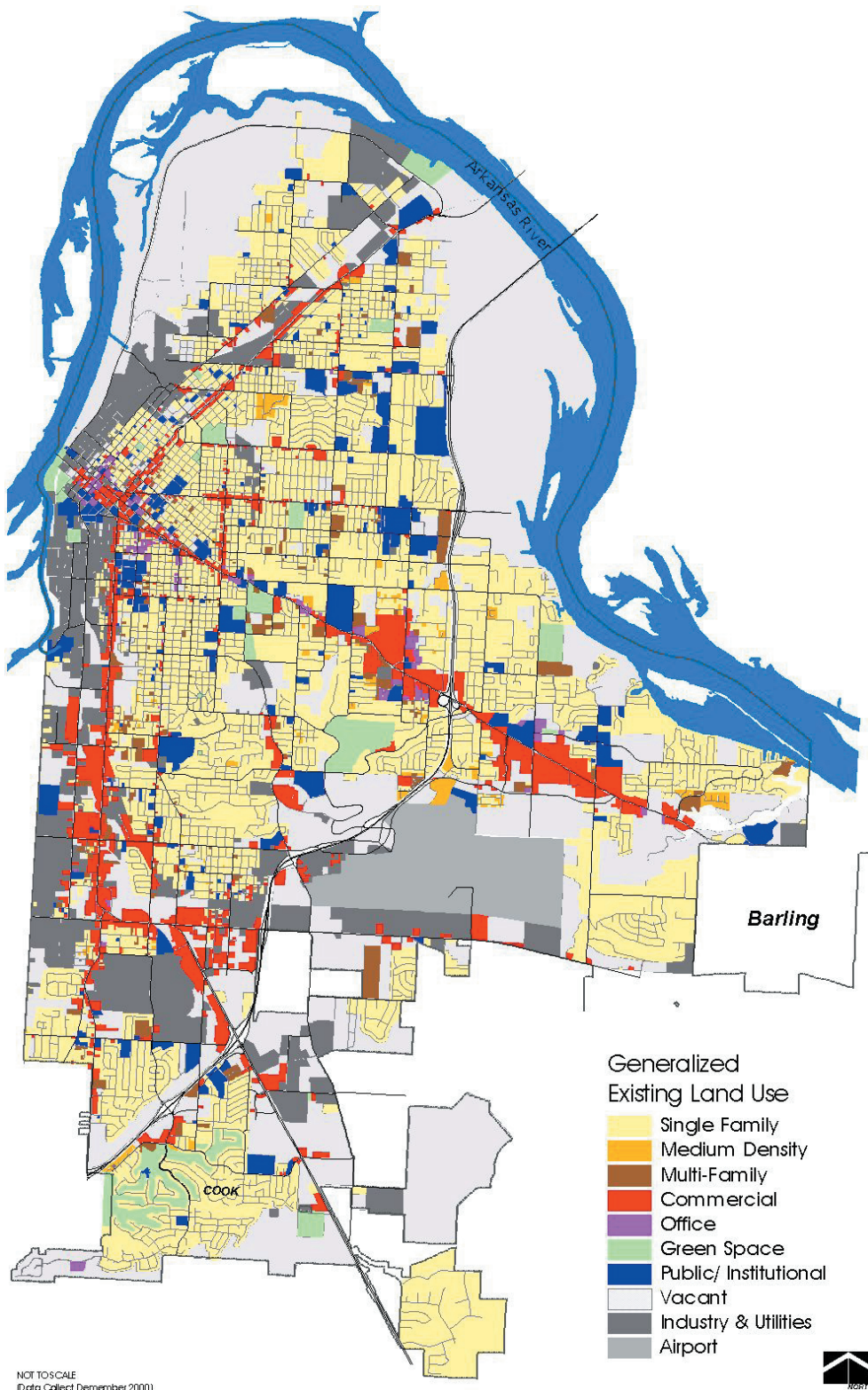
Multi-family residential use refers to attached dwelling units that have multiple stories and are generally either apartments or condominiums. This residential use offers the highest number of dwelling units per acre and makes up 0.83 square miles, or around 540 acres, of Fort Smith's land use. While it comprises less than 2% of the city's total land area, it is found throughout the community.



apartments are in large former single family dwellings that have been converted. Most single family conversions are in mixed-use areas or in predominantly single family neighborhoods. Multi-family uses in the newer neighborhoods have single, freestanding apartment buildings and larger apartment complexes with amenities such as abundant landscaping, an outdoor pool or other recreation facilities, laundry facilities, and a common club room. These units are in structures between two and eight stories in height.

Apartment buildings are located in the older parts of the city, often within predominately single-family residential areas. A number of

Generalized Existing Land Use



Section 2 - Fort Smith Today

Existing Land Use and Zoning

Commercial

Activities in this category typically include retail, office, restaurants, and general services. This group of uses also includes auto repair activities. This land use makes-up roughly 6% of the city's total land area. A typical city of 100,000 or more will have only 4% of their land area devoted to these uses.

Commercial



Commercial

A commercial place of business buys and sells goods, services and entertainment to the surrounding neighborhoods, community and region. Fort Smith has 3.2 square miles, or about 2,050 acres, of land in commercial use.

Fort Smith has a number of commercial corridors that have evolved with very diverse and independent activities, as well as "shopping centers" and "commercial strips". Commercial strips are generally oriented to automobile traffic and are located along the major roadways. Rogers Avenue is the primary commercial shopping strip in Fort Smith. Towson Avenue used to be the prominent commercial strip, and it

still functions as a major commercial corridor through town.

Large retailers and restaurants attract people from the surrounding counties. Most of these commercial activities are located on the major roads leading into and out of the downtown. Region serving commercial, large high volume and specialty stores, reside on Rogers Avenue, Towson Avenue, Zero Street, Highways 71 and 271, and Midland Boulevard. While Grand Avenue, North "O" Street and Phoenix Avenue provide more local, neighborhood and specialty serving commercial. The largest concentration of commerce is in the downtown area.



Office

Office

The category of office land use can describe a large scale office park or a small one tenant house conversion, and may include limited service and retail uses that are complementary to those businesses. Typically, office space is occupied by businesses that provide services instead of products, and/or management and administrative functions for businesses that manufacture products. Less than 0.25 square miles, or 150 acres, are occupied by office structures.

The highest concentration of office space is in the downtown area, where financial and government offices are located. Other concentrations occur along Rogers Avenue, Greenwood Avenue, Old Greenwood Road and at Beverly Way and 71 south. At both of these locations, commercial services and retail are within close proximity. Most offices are daily destinations for employees, and the neighboring commercial uses provide convenient goods and services. This mixture of uses is attractive to both future and current employees and employers.

Existing Land Use and Zoning

Industrial

Fort Smith is known as the manufacturing capital of Arkansas, accounting for 13% of all manufacturing output in the state. Roughly 14% of the city's land area is in this use. This percentage includes airport land and excludes Fort Chaffee industry and Sebastian county plants along SH 45. Generally, cities the size of Fort Smith or larger devote less than 7% of their land to these activities. The industrial category includes primarily manufacturing and warehousing activities.

Industry

Industrial land use covers more than 10% of city land, 5.2 square miles, or approximately 3,334 acres. Only single family residential and land classified as vacant cover more land area in the city. If land within the airport area and industrial facilities just outside the city limits, such as Mac Steel, are included, this figure is considerably higher. Vacant land zoned for industry doubles the existing industrial base, and Fort Chaffee adds more than 1,000 acres designated for industrial development.

Generally, this land use involves both light and heavy manufacturing activities, distribution and warehousing activities, and any activity that may be considered odor or noise producing. The majority of industrial activity is located in the northwest, west, and southeast sections of the city;

north of Midland, between the Oklahoma border and Towson Avenue, Zero Street South, Highway 45 south and near the airport.

The placement of rail lines and the river greatly influenced the location of industry in Fort Smith, as it has done across the country. Today industry still takes advantage of the efficiency of both rail and

barge transportation systems to move products across the country. Major rail lines are located north of Midland, southwest of the downtown, just east of the Oklahoma border, and fanning out southeast toward Highway 71 south.



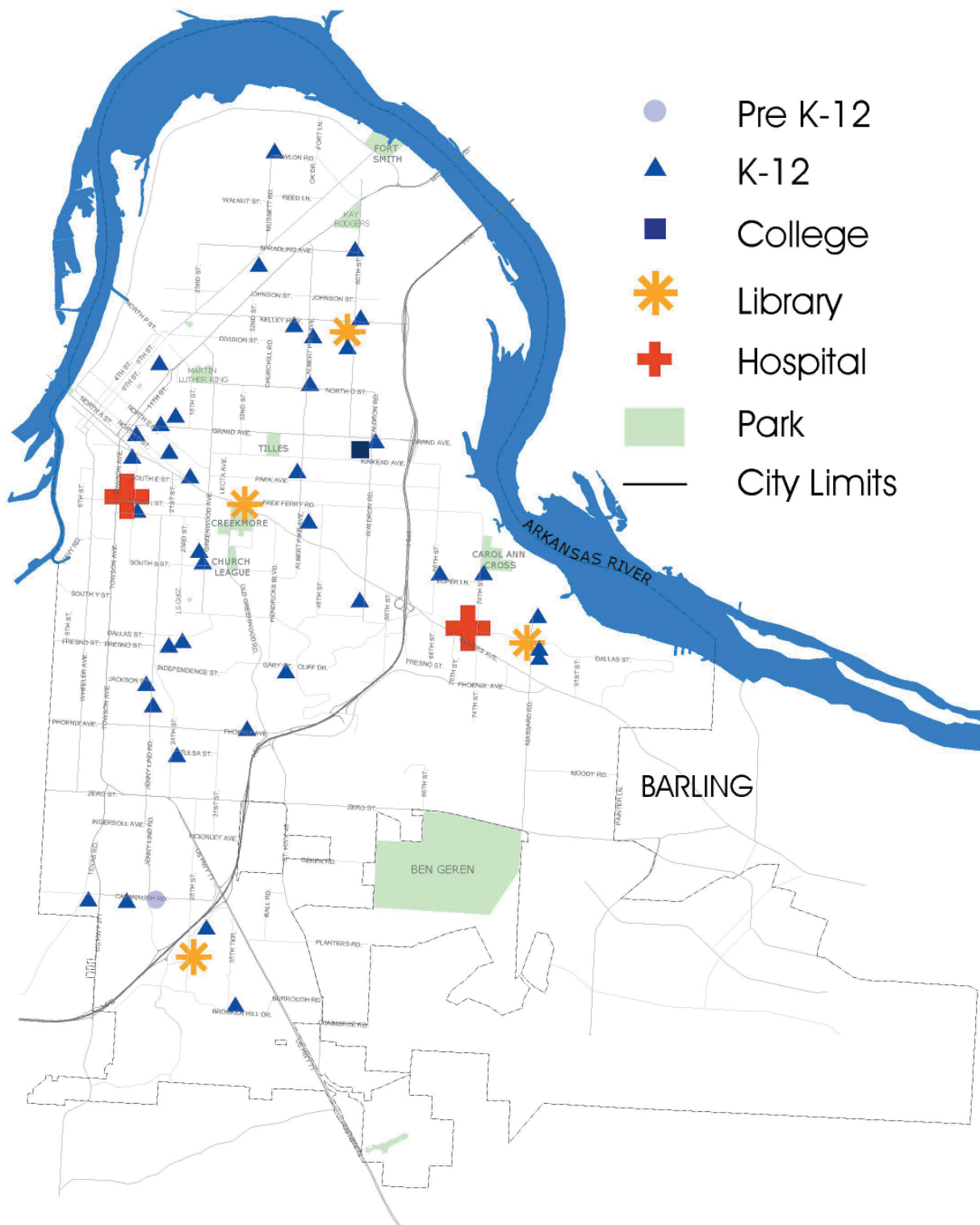
Airport

The Fort Smith Regional Airport is located in the southeastern part of the city, south of East Phoenix Avenue, I-540 and north of Highway 255. It is jointly used by the Air National Guard and occupies a large area of land, more than 2.1 square miles, 1,360

acres. A larger land area is within the impact area or flight paths, identified by noise contours. The majority of land owned by the airport is zoned I-2 for industrial activities. (pages 2-41 & 4-36)

Section 2 - Fort Smith Today

Existing Parks and Community Facilities



Utilities

While utilities are generally considered a public good, they are not accessible to the public and are generally considered industrial in character. A wide range of land uses are categorized as a utility such as telecommunication towers, sewage treatment plants, water storage and pumping facilities, power transformer stations, and power lines. Roughly, 72 acres were counted in this use. Facilities such as telecommunications towers are located throughout the community and are probably under represented in this calculation due to the difficulty in mapping the exact land area at the city scale.

Public

Public land uses are those that involve the provision of services that contribute to the general health, safety and welfare of a community. Open space, parks, recreation, education, medical facilities, police stations, fire stations, libraries, cemeteries, community facilities, and other similar activities are in this category. Communities of Fort Smith's size typically have more than 8% of their land in these uses. The parks and recreation portion of a city's land area typically makes up 5%, education facilities 2%, and cemeteries and other utilities 1-4%. These uses can generally occur, or are allowed, in any zoning district. In Fort Smith, they occur primarily in residential and commercial zones.

Parks and Open Space

This category is designed for outdoor relaxation and recreation. Parks, golf courses, and designated nature areas are classified as parks and open space. Both public and privately owned land, such as golf courses, are included in this mapping.

In 2001 the City of Fort Smith owned and maintained 268.27 acres of parkland for a population of more than 80,000. This is approximately 0.4 square miles, or less than 1% of all city land. Using the National RPA (Recreation and Parks Association) standard of .016 acres of land per person, a deficit of roughly 1,000 acres of parkland must be addressed in order to meet national standards of 1,280 acres for the 2000 population. While every community is different, and Fort Smith is fortunate to be located near national forests, these opportunities do not provide city residents with daily sports and recreation activities.

The largest park facility (800 acres) available to Fort Smith residents, Ben Geren Regional Park, is a Sebastian County park located just outside the city limits. With the disposition of Fort Chaffee Lands, an additional 322 acres may be added to this facility. If Ben Geren is included in city totals for this land use, it may technically meet national quantitative standards.

The city operates 23 city parks that provide residents with places to enjoy nature and participate in passive and active recreational activities. Baseball and soccer fields, jogging trails, volleyball, basketball and tennis courts, boat docks, gazebos, benches, nature trails, outdoor pools, water features, gardens and an amphitheater are offered by existing facilities.



Existing Land Use and Zoning

Public and Institutional

Public or institutional land uses are generally owned and/or paid for by taxpayers and their governments. A few of these activities are quasi-public, such as hospitals, private schools and religious facilities.

Because they offer fundamental public services, and may have a different taxing status, they are usually classified as public. All government buildings, hospitals, health care facilities, schools, various institutions, libraries, and cemeteries are considered a public or institutional land use. Almost 2.2 square miles, 1,395 acres or 4% of Fort Smith total land area, is classified as public use.

Churches, schools, and libraries can be found in most, if not all, neighborhoods. Other public uses such as government offices, cemeteries, and hospitals that serve larger areas, are located in more central downtown and arterial locations.

Hospitals are located on, or near, major

roadways, specifically Rogers and Towson Avenues. There are ten fire stations and one police station that fit into this category as well.

There are 28 public educational institutions in Fort Smith: 20 elementary schools, four junior high schools, two high schools, a center for adult education and an alternative learning center for grades 7-12. The University of Arkansas Fort Smith, occupies a large land area in this grouping.

Fort Smith area residents have access to some of the best health care in the country. Sparks Health System and St. Edward Mercy Medical Center are both located within the city limits and serve the larger region. St. Edward Mercy Medical Center, located on Rogers Avenue, was named one of the top 100 cardiovascular hospitals in the nation in 1999. Sparks Health Systems, is located near the downtown off Towson Avenue, and offers a number of different community sites. Both facilities occupy relatively large land areas in the city.

Vacant

Open pasture, forests, agricultural undeveloped parcels of land, and abandoned commercial and residential properties are grouped in this category. More than 13 square miles, 8,500 acres of land, are considered vacant. While there are vacant parcels throughout the city, large areas are located on the north side. Due to the 100-year floodplain, the land surrounding the

Clayton Expressway, adjacent to the river, is classified as vacant. Other areas remain vacant due to physical constraints, such as steep slopes, drainageways or lack of infrastructure. Vacant land can be zoned for any use. The majority of vacant land in the city is along the river and has been historically zoned for Industry.



Local Church



Sparks Hospital

Land Use Totals

2000 City Land Use Totals (without Fort Chaffee, SQ MI)

Fort Chaffee Proposed Land Use (SQ MI)

Residential	35%	Residential	23%
Single Family	17.57	Mix of units	2.50
Duplex	0.37		
Multi-Family	0.83		
Public	6%	Public	5.00 45%
Parks	1.13	Parks	3.80
Semi-Public	2.18		
Commercial	6%	Commercial	1.19 11%
Commercial	3.23		
Office	0.25		
Industry	14%	Industry	1.74 16%
Industrial	5.21		
Airport	2.13		
Vacant	13.35 25%		
Right-of-Way	15%	Right-of-Way*	0.72 6%
City Totals	54 100%	City Totals	11.15 100%

* Does not include local and collector facilities to be constructed with private development of existing vacant land

2.3.3 Transportation - The Circulation System

Transportation of people and goods is directly related to the land uses through which it moves. The city is both defined and constrained by the network of highways, roads, trails, rails, air and transit services that move people and goods in, through and out of the community. A comprehensive, well-planned and efficiently functioning circulation system is essential to Fort Smith's long-term growth, character and vitality.

2.3.3 Transportation - The Circulation System

Transportation affects the community's physical, social, visual and economic environment and is directly linked to the land use patterns and the history of the city. As is the case with most cities, as it grew out from the downtown along the major roads, commercial activity slowly began replacing farms and rural residential uses. Industrial activity sprang up where large land parcels were available, and residential neighborhoods followed. As the city has grown, industrial activity in the center and older sections of town has become more difficult to access, and commercial activity has spread down every major corridor through the city.

Fort Smith is fortunate to have all modes of transportation available - roads, rail, water and air. This is unique for a city of 80,000 people. With daily flights scheduled by two national airlines, the Regional airport connects the city to the world. Rail freight transportation is still very active and a major contributor to the economic vitality of the region. In 2002, the city had more than 590 miles of city streets to maintain (not including Fort Chaffee annexed land), 124 traffic signals, and 5,400 streetlights to manage.

The freight system of water, rail, truck and air transport continues to adapt to new technologies and delivery practices. Shippers and customers seek greater coordination between water and rail, truck and rail, air and truck shipments. Access to ports, rail

yards and regional highways needs to be direct and reliable without conflicting with non-industrial uses.

Construction of the interstate highway system has altered land uses and circulation patterns in Ft. Smith, creating new corridors for industrial and commercial development. Older State highways such as Midland Boulevard, once sized to serve both through and local traffic now cater mainly to local traffic. Retail trends over the last generation have created larger buildings located close to growing residential areas. With few streets serving them, these locations experience increased traffic congestion.

The City and region continue to grow in terms of land area, population and number of households. That growth means more trips for work, school, shopping, recreation, and for the goods that support those activities. It also means new demands for bicycling, walking and transit. New needs for safety and convenience also arise. The transportation system, especially the street system, must adapt to those geographic and demand patterns if it is to serve them well. As a regional destination for a seven county area, the transportation system not only has to meet the needs of local residents and tourists, it also must meet the needs of commuters coming into the city for work, shopping, medical and government services.

The Road Network

Fort Smith has a street system based on the common hierarchy of arterial, collector, and local roads. In this system, arterial roads are designed to handle the highest volumes of traffic, as through streets connecting the major trip generators of the city. Networks of collector roads feed the arterials, provide access into and through neighborhoods, and serve local streets. Local streets are designed solely to provide access to land and tend to make up the highest percentage of total street mileage in the city, while supporting the least number of vehicle miles of travel. Local streets are general neighborhood residential streets, but can also serve commercial and industrial areas.

The Master Street Plan was originally adopted in 1956, with revisions occurring in 1978, 1985 and 1990. Existing land uses and current conditions were not fully considered when the last adoption of the Street Plan occurred in 1990. The Plan does not address connectivity with the County road system and development within the City's Planning Area.

With only three basic right-of-way designs adopted, the City has had little flexibility in adapting the system to meet changing conditions and demands. Several facilities, designated in 1956 as arterial roadways, are still designated as arterials although the character, function and existing land uses along these rights-of-way indicate they should be designated as collectors.

The layout of the road system has created unique traffic circulation patterns. The many angled streets, overlaid on the city grid has created both wonderful opportunities as well as movement challenges. With industry historically located central to town, many facilities have multiple burdens to handle truck movements as well as in-commuting employees and cross town traffic. All roads fan out from the northern, downtown, historic section of the city. With three major bridge crossings over the Arkansas River, the main crossing from Oklahoma into downtown comes straight into downtown on U.S. Highway 64, or Garrison Avenue. Only the I-540 crossing provides full, direct access to most destinations within the city. As the city grows to the Southeast, to Fort Chaffee and along Highway 45, I-540 will become more of a main roadway through Fort Smith.

In 1985, Fort Smith residents passed a City 1¢ sales tax, dedicated to streets, bridges and associated drainage improvements. This tax was again endorsed in 1995 and has enabled the city to make major improvements throughout the city (see also page 2-21). In 2000, street sales tax revenue came to more than 15 million dollars. The City has used the sales tax as a local match for significant federal grants.



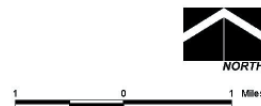
Roadway in Fort Smith



City of Fort Smith Master Street Plan, Adopted 1990



SEPTEMBER 6, 2002
SOURCE: CITY OF FORT SMITH



Commercial Corridors

The primary arterials through town have become the main commercial corridors as well, effectively compromising their function as through streets. With limited North-South and East-West effective arterial through streets, overloading on roads such as Rogers and Greenwood Avenues is a frequent occurrence. Both the Steering Committee and public heavily criticized the appearance and congestion of the City's commercial corridors. Criticisms included:

- Too many curb-cuts, driveways and continuous driveways with no clear entry
- Lack of landscaping, too much asphalt and concrete
- Cluttered, confusing unattractive signage
- Dangerous, congested, and stressful conditions

Main Commercial Arterials:

Midland Boulevard	Rogers Avenue
Towson Avenue	Wheeler Avenue
Grand Avenue	10th & 11th downtown pair
Zero Street	

Corridors in Transition:

Jenny Lind Road	Greenwood Avenue
Old Greenwood Road	Phoenix Avenue
Kelley Highway	Massard Road

Existing Community Gateways:

- I-540 south at U.S. 271
- I-540 north to/from Fayetteville and the east-west I-40 corridor
- I-540 Interchanges
 - Kelley Highway
 - Rogers Avenue / State Highway 22
 - Zero Street at State 255
 - Jenny Lind Road
 - Grand Avenue
 - U.S. 71South
 - Old Greenwood Road/
Phoenix Avenue
- U.S. 64 West to/from I-40 in Oklahoma across the Arkansas River into Downtown
- U.S. 71/64 - Midland Boulevard Bridge - into/from Van Buren
- Arkansas Highway 22, Rogers Avenue from the City of Barling

The Transit System

The city offers both Fixed Route and Demand Responsive transit. As the only transit system in the region, some have moved from other towns and rural areas into Fort Smith, in order to meet their transportation needs. The four fixed routes run generally from 6:00a.m. to 7:00p.m. Monday through Saturday, along the major corridors through town; Rogers Avenue, Towson Avenue, Midland Boulevard, and Grand Avenue. For those traveling outside of the Fixed Route area, the Demand Response service is available. This is a curb to curb service designed primarily to meet the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), and is heavily used. It consists of three smaller buses traveling in their own corridors (North, South and East)

In any given month in 2001, an average of 10,000 riders were served, with more than 140,000 served by year's end. Saturday travel is double that of weekday travel indicating that discretionary trips use transit as much or more than regular work trips. School aged children use the transit system to access parks and swimming areas.

The Bicycle Plan

In 1998, the Bi-State Metropolitan Planning Organization , WAPPD, staff and the Fort Smith Parks Commission, with the assistance of a dedicated task force, began preparation of a Bikeway Plan for the city. This was adopted and incorporated into the Master Street Plan in 2000. The plan uses the Portland Oregon and Oregon Department of Transportation design and construction specification and proposes an extensive trail and route system to connect the city. (see Section 4.2, page 4-32)

Freight Movement

Truck Routes

More than 31 trucking lines are located in the Fort Smith area and routing them around the city, instead of through the city has been largely successful except on the Northside of town and in and around the downtown. With major industries, still located central to town this has been a constant challenge

both for the trucking industry as well as the city.

Primary truck routes include Wheeler Avenue and Zero Streets providing access to U.S. 71 and I-540.

Rail

The Arkansas-Missouri Railroad, Fort Smith Railroad and the Kansas City Southern Railroad continue to serve Fort Smith. The railroad has played an important role in the growth and development of Fort Smith and in the local economy. The vast majority of the existing industrial activity parallels past and present rail lines through the center of the city. Most of the rail lines are located in the north, west, and southeast corners of town. The placement of rail lines has created corridors of industry, influencing the way Fort Smith developed.

One of the largest corridors of industry runs parallel to the Oklahoma border. Located between the Oklahoma State line to the west and US 71 to the east, the industrial land use is adjacent to the busy rail line "Arkansas & Missouri Railroad". This major north/south line serves northwest Arkansas and southwest Missouri. Following the same basic route of US 71, The Arkansas & Missouri Railroad connects Fort Smith to other major rail lines and cities such as Kansas City, St. Louis, and Little Rock.

Barge

Barge transport is one of the most energy-efficient forms of transportation, and is active through and out of Fort Smith due to the McClellan-Kerr Navigation System.

Four hundred and forty-five miles long with 17 locks and dams; the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System (MCKARNS) is a reliable, year-round waterway into the Southeast. By providing a series of navigation pools connected by locks, the Corps of Engineers has enabled the Arkansas River to overcome a 420-foot difference in elevation, from the Mississippi River to the head of navigation at Catoosa, Oklahoma.

Fort Smith currently has three privately held ports on the Arkansas River, directly serving industry and mining interests and one public port. The Port of Fort Smith, located on the Oklahoma border, at the confluence of the Poteau and Arkansas Rivers, offers a 9-foot channel depth and two on-site warehouse facilities for general commercial use. This facility has not been used to its capacity in recent years.

In 1999, a study was conducted on the feasibility of developing a regional intermodal facility at the Port of Van Buren. This project is currently underway. It will offer rail, truck barge and warehousing transfer capabilities to better serve regional transport needs.

Section 2 - Fort Smith Today

Air

The Fort Smith Regional Airport was originally established in 1937 when the city acquired 430 acres of land through general obligation bonds. The City transferred the airport in its entirety to the seven member Fort Smith Airport Commission, established in 1977. The Commission serves as the governing body of the airport, is appointed by the Board of Directors and members serve for five-year terms.

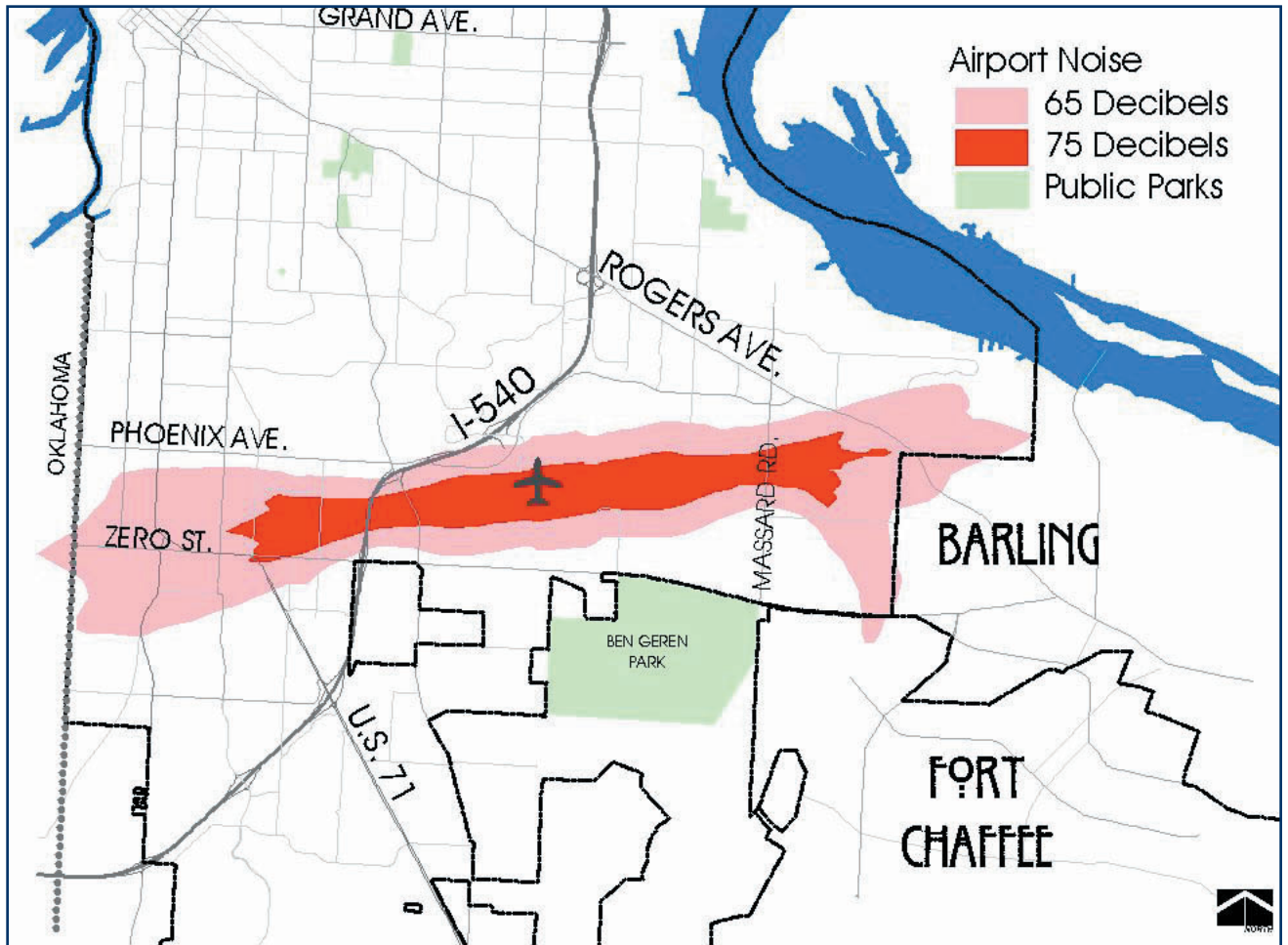
The airport serves general aviation, military and national carriers. F-16s can regularly be seen over Fort Smith skies, as they take off and land at the Regional Airport. Between 1989 and 2001 the airport received 25 million dollars in grants in aid from the Federal Aviation Administration to reconstruct the airfield and more than 1 million dollars from the Arkansas Department of Aeronautics.

In 1995, the Commission conducted a land use impact analysis of the airport and vicinity as the first step in meeting the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations for noise impacts on land development. The United States Congress and FAA have established criteria and regulations, the Part 150 Noise Study, that establish land use compatibility guidelines based on Day-Night Average Sound Levels (DNL). Noise contours are mapped, using decibel ratings, based on flight paths, with levels between 65 DNL and 75 DNL considered unacceptable noise levels for residential development.

Fort Smith completed the Regulation Part 150 Noise Study in 1996, approved by the FAA in 1997. At the time it was estimated that approximately 691 acres of residential land in the City were impacted by airport noise, and up to 1,900 homes sit within the 65+DNL-noise contour or impact field. Development proposals within the airport noise and accident impact areas are required to be reviewed by the Airport Commission, before being heard by the Planning Commission and Board of Directors. In order for the airport to continue its FAA rating, funding eligibility and military training, land use activity needs to be compatible with airport functions.

The City has not previously adopted any of the federal guidelines, regarding airport noise and accident paths, in its development regulations. City staff and the Commission have been acting on these guidelines in reviewing development proposals, but the existing zoning patterns are not compatible with airport needs and development pressure has moved very strongly to the south of town. An airport specific land use and zoning plan, through the use of an overlay district, needs to be developed and adopted.

Airport Noise Contour Impact Area

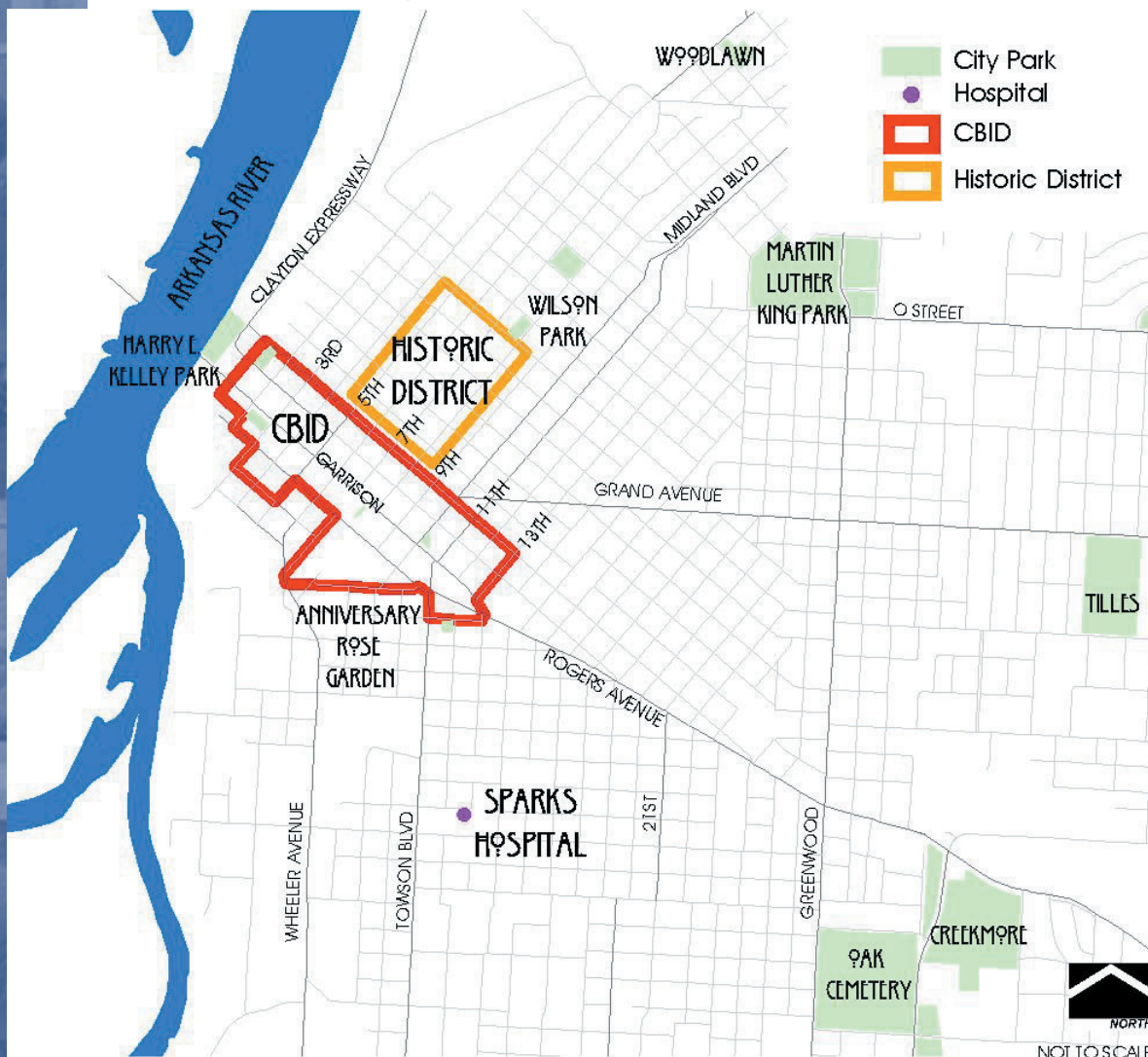


2.4 AREA AND ISSUES SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS

2.4.1 DOWNTOWN FORT SMITH

Downtown Fort Smith is still the City's center for commerce and government. State, Federal, County and City offices are located downtown. National historic sites, several major industries, several prominent banks, realtors, architects and lawyers are also located downtown. While retail is not strong, prominent city jewelers, furniture and antique shops are still viable. Several dining establishments are city destinations and downtown events draw thousands from around the region. Even so, as is the case with many historic downtowns, there are many vacant and deteriorated buildings, and investment remains uncoordinated.

Central Business Improvement District and the Downtown District



The Central Business Improvement District (CBID) was created in 1978 and has been successful in bringing property owners, merchants, and city staff together to keep the downtown vital. Since the destruction of the tornado in 1996, the city has been actively working with the CBID and property owners to revitalize the downtown. Major public and private investments have stimulated great interest in reinvestment. The completion of the Convention Center in 2001, Garrison Avenue streetscape improvements, and the Riverfront Pavilions and Amphitheater have been the result of more than \$50 million dollars in public investments that have begun to reposition downtown for the future.

The following summarizes the issues that still face the downtown, and the assets that it can benefit from.

Summary of Issues:

- Property assemblage and land acquisition obstacles for larger projects
- Lack of information about building and land inventory
- A higher level of risk is present without a downtown master plan
- Need for a market study: viable uses from an economic and market perspective
- Different groups have not come together to share information, ideas and concerns
- Little retail core or concentration to serve as a destination
- Competing and dispersed commercial, office and employment activities that drain resources and market away from downtown
- Activity and investments are dispersed - no concentrated area of activity
- Riverfront, east and west, impaired with railroad and industrial activity
- Train activity still heavy through downtown and along river
- Truck transportation route still heavy through the pedestrian areas of downtown
- Image problem: perceptions about parking, business success, safety, and transient populations.

Summary of Assets:

- Riverfront Amphitheater, Events Building and Pavilion, and National Historic Site
- Hotel and Convention Center visitors
- Garrison Avenue streetscape investments
- Ability to create Tax Increment Financing Districts or TIF if needed
- Growing strength and staffing of *Go Downtown*, a partnership between the City and CBID
- Both day and night time activities are present
- People are becoming more interested in investing in downtown
- Convention Center and Riverpark events continue to bring people downtown
- There are strong visual landmarks such as the Immaculate Conception Church to capitalize on



Convention Center



Section 2 - Fort Smith Today

Views of downtown



ISSUES AND ASSETS

(DOWNTOWN FORT SMITH)

- Existing Truck Route Inappropriate for Recreation and Tourist Activities
- Success of Concert Series
- Poor Entry
- Noise from Bridge Distracts Concert
- Limited Ground Floor Activity Throughout Downtown
- Convention Center Isolated - No Clear Destinations By Foot From Center
- Heritage Destinations
- Numerous Triangular Traffic Islands Provide Opportunities for Gateways, Art, & Landscaping
- Downtown/ Riverfront Circulation and Parking Plan Revisions Needed

2.4.2 The Riverfront

The City's river frontage has been an underutilized community asset. Inconsistent land uses, lack of connections from city commercial and residential developments, and historic zoning patterns have effectively isolated the Arkansas River from the majority of the city. After the tornado of 1996, public attention and investments began to turn back to the river. The expansion of Harry E. Kelley Riverpark in 2001, located on the on the river, adjacent to the Garrison Street bridge, is the most prominent example of this. Recognizing the need to connect the river with downtown, a Riverfront Master Plan was developed in 1996, by a Board appointed Task Force with the assistance of MAHG Architecture and BRW Inc., a multi-disciplinary consulting firm. While it was never adopted, it has been the basis for many of the actions the City and private sector have undertaken.

As in most towns that developed along a river, Fort Smith began its history of commerce and industry along the Arkansas River. The Arkansas River defines the

northern half of the City. The Poteau River helps define the western boundary at the Arkansas-Oklahoma border, between 'W' Street and the Arkansas-Poteau River confluence. Historic zoning and land use patterns reflect industrial location preferences for river and rail transportation. Barge and rail traffic continue to move goods to and from Fort Smith and the surrounding region.

Over the years, floods have determined what activities are truly viable. Developments on the bluffs have remained overtime, while those within both the Arkansas River and the May Branch floodplains have come and gone. Much of the city's riverfront is still zoned for industrial use, even though it is largely in the floodplain and therefore undevelopable. Access to the river is limited, with views of the Arkansas River available from only a few locations.

The existing road infrastructure provides a boundary between the riverfront and the majority of the City to the south. Clayton Expressway parallels the Arkansas River from Garrison Avenue to Midland Boulevard, north and west. Interstate I-540 from the Arkansas River to Grand Avenue also provides a man made boundary on the East Side of the City.



The Arkansas



New Riverfront Amphitheater



Residential area marina in area I

Section 2 - Fort Smith Today

Area Analysis - Existing Conditions

Established building patterns, land uses, and natural features define the riverfront as a district. Several sub-areas and smaller districts further define this area of the city.

Area A - West, Industrial

Area A is located immediately south of the downtown, between the river and Wheeler Avenue. It is predominately in industrial and manufacturing use, with the majority of the area occupied by a furniture manufacturing company occupying multiple structures and sites. For the most part, this portion of the riverfront is underutilized due to lack of public access and the design and nature of the uses fronting it. Both the Arkansas and Missouri and the Union Pacific rail lines move through the area, with the Union Pacific running parallel to the Poteau River before moving southeast along U.S.71.

Area B - Downtown, Heritage/Cultural

Area B is the current activity generator along the riverfront, providing a cultural, heritage, community event and visitor destination area. There are three major anchors: the National Cemetery, Fort Smith National Historic Site, and the Amphitheater at Harry E. Kelley Riverpark (The Events Building and Amphitheater were completed in the spring of 2001.). A pedestrian and bike trail links Kelley Park to the Fort Smith National Historic Site. These areas are appropriately zoned O-1, Open Space.

The Fort Smith National Historic Site celebrates the City's founding heritage as one of the outposts between the United States, and at that time, the westward frontier territories. The site contains various structures including; the remains of the original

1817 fort, 'Hangin' Judge' Parker's gallows; the original commissary building, and an extensive interactive interpretive complex located in the original barracks building from the second fort.

The U.S. National Cemetery is located a block southeast of the National Historic Site, and contains nearly 10,000 graves - among them local and national figures such as Judge Issac "C" Parker and William O. Darby, founder of 'Darby's Rangers'.

Many other cultural venues are located nearby such as; the Fort Smith trolley Museum, featuring a fully-restored, electric streetcar that makes regular half-mile runs; Miss Laura's Visitor Center; the Fort Smith Museum of History, and the Belle Grove Historic District.

Area C - Downtown - Riverfront

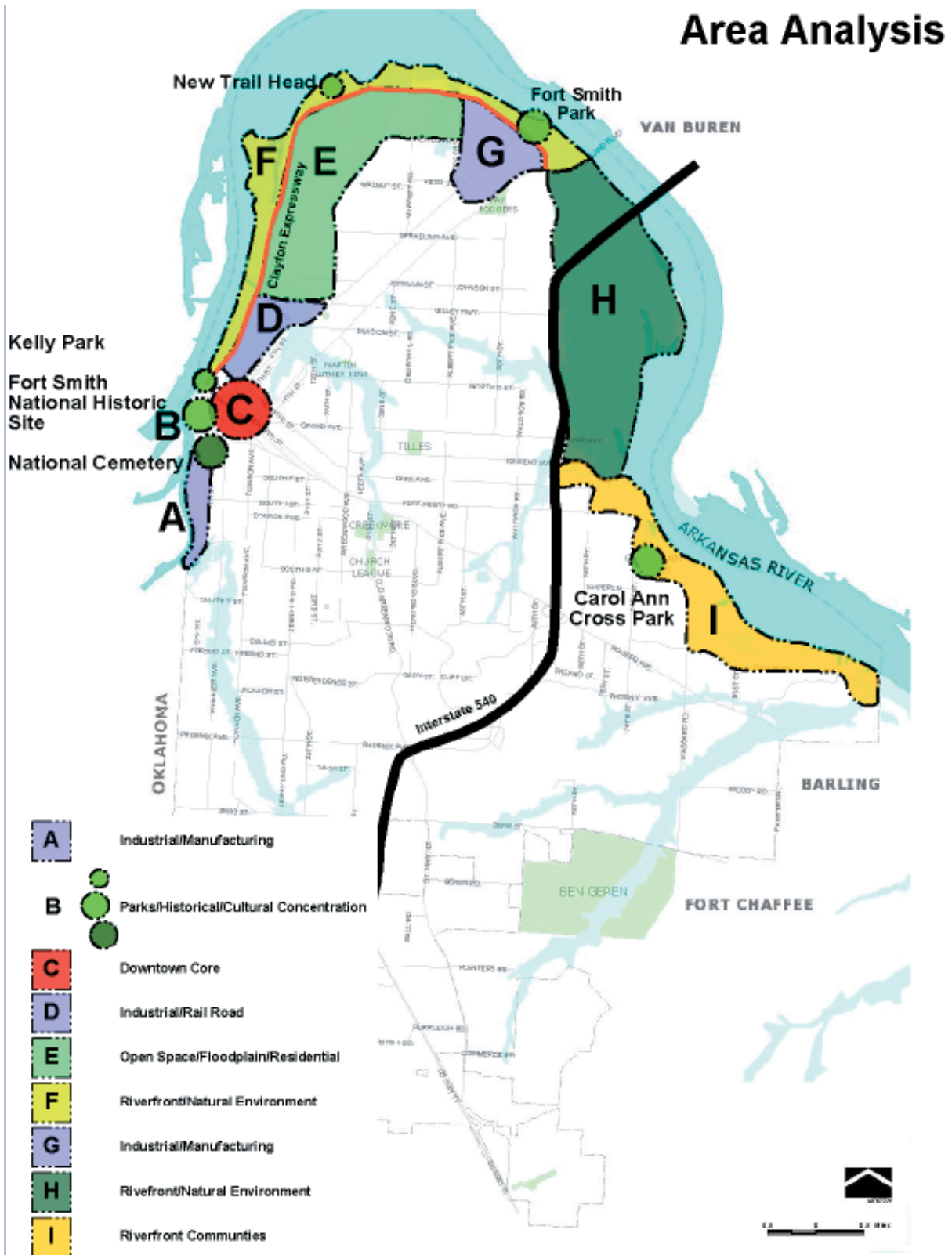
Area C can be defined as the transition area between the river and the downtown. The transition area begins at the existing railroad lines, just west of 1st Street and continues east to approximately 5th Street, and from east to south from the National Cemetery to the Belle Grove Historic District. This area is zoned C-6-SPL, which was established for development of the original downtown and the areas immediately adjacent. North of "B" Street, the land is zoned I-2, to accommodate light industrial, low impact uses.



Area A



Area B



Area Analysis - Existing Conditions

Area C - Downtown - Riverfront

The area north of Garrison Avenue, from Kelley Riverpark to roughly 3rd Street, has been the subject of study and planning since the 1996 tornado, and generally described as Produce Row.



Area D

Area D - Northeast, Downtown

Clayton Expressway defines area D to the west, Johnson Street to the north, 5th Street to the east and "B" Street to the south. The area is predominantly located in the May Branch floodplain, and it supports railroad activity. An earthen levee and concrete floodwall extend along Clayton Expressway. There are industrial uses, a recycling facility, and railroad storage yards within this district. Arkansas Refrigeration is located at the corner of "B" Street and the Clayton Expressway.

Many structures in this area are vacant, or were destroyed, remnants of the 1996 tornado. Active industrial uses are primarily for equipment or material storage. The land is zoned for Industrial activities (I-2, I-3, I-4, I-32-0 and C-5) with a few residential uses remaining.



Area F

Area E - Clayton Expressway South

Area E runs from Johnson Street to Fort Lane, along the east and south side of Clayton Expressway. More than one-half of this area is located within the floodplain. Overall, the land is undeveloped, with historic zoning in I-2-SPL and I-2 zones for light industrial activities. The "P" Street

sewer water treatment plant is located here and, mixed density, single-family residential neighborhoods border the eastern portion of Area E.

Area F - River Frontage

Area F is generally undeveloped river environs, located between the Arkansas River, the levee, and Clayton Expressway. The area contains mature stands of trees, wetlands, and indigenous vegetation. A trail-head facility, consisting of a paved parking lot and trail, runs along a former private earthen levee. This trail is planned to connect with Kelley Park and Fort Smith Park to the east. The majority of this land area is zoned I-2, and all of it is in the 100-year floodplain.

Area G - Northside Business and Industrial Park

Area G is primarily in industrial use. OK Foods and Gerber industrial facilities are located along Fort Lane, off 6th Street as it intersects with Clayton Expressway. Due to grade changes along this portion of Clayton Expressway, there is a limited view of this area from the river. Immediately opposite this intersection, fronting the river to the north is Fort Smith Park.

This area is zoned I-32-O (Special industrial areas for unusual bulk and expansion requirements) and R-3-SF and MF (single family and multi-family residential with minimum lot size of 6,500 square feet).

Area Analysis - Existing Conditions

Area H - River East

Area H exhibits similar qualities to that of Area F, but covers a larger land area. It is almost completely located within the floodplain, with access provided at the Clayton Expressway terminus with Midland Boulevard, at Grand Avenue as it crosses under I-540, and at the Kelley Highway overpass of I-540. Between Midland Boulevard and I-540, the land is zoned I-4 (with restrictions), C-5 and C-2 adjacent to I-540. A small area has been cleared and informally used by motorbikes, at the Clayton Expressway terminus with Midland Boulevard. Southeast of I-540, the land is currently zoned I-2, I-2-SPL, and I-3 (light and medium intensity industrial activities), with the only industrial use at Grand Avenue, where a sand dredging operation is still active. Farming activities are also still active in Area H.

Area I - River Residential

Area I begins at Grand Avenue to the east and continues south along the river until it reaches Barling City limits. This area is residential in nature, with various developments engaging the riverfront and/or developed with private marinas for recreational boating. Between Grand Avenue to the north and Park Avenue to the south, the land is zoned O-1 (Open Space), while south of Park Avenue the area is zoned for mixed density residential use in the R-2-SF, R-2-DP and R-3-MF zoning categories.

Summary of Area Issues and Assets

- Riverfront has limited access by car, foot, bicycle and transit.
- The Arkansas River continues to be isolated from nearby downtown and residential neighborhoods.
- Existing zoning patterns are inappropriate

for central city, land locked, riverfront 100-year floodplain land areas.

- Current land use is not in the highest and best use, or in accordance with best management practices supported by State land use and environmental policies.
- Clayton Expressway's current designation as a truck route further isolates the river from community access and enjoyment.



Area I

- The Clayton Expressway is a scenic roadway, with relatively low traffic volumes.
- The Thursday Night Riverfront Concert Series (started in 2001) was successful.
- There is strong support for redefining the riverfront district, with a variety of uses such as: marinas, hotels, regional sports complex, mixed-income housing, wildlife sanctuaries, golf courses, museums, trails, and interpretive centers.
- The 1996 tornado and flooding have restored much of the natural river environment of wetlands and second growth vegetation attractive to birds, waterfowl and wildlife.
- There is high demand for ball fields, marinas, and quality housing on the north side of the city.

2.4.3 Fort Chaffee

Fort Chaffee has been an integral part of the City of Fort Smith since it was established in 1941. It has a rich history, tied to United States international involvement and military defense. The 76,000 acre military base was transformed from agricultural use to the training ground for thousands of troops heading overseas during World War II. Located southeast of the city, within Sebastian County and crossing the Arkansas River into Crawford County, Fort Chaffee extends southeast along State Highway 22, between US. 71, State Highway 10 and State Highway 22.

History

At different times in its history, between wars, Fort Chaffee has been placed on inactive status. This occurred between World War II and the Korean War, and again between the Korean War and the War in Vietnam. It was reactivated as the Headquarters for the 4th Armored Division and designated as the U.S. Army Training Center for Field Artillery in 1956. In 1958, Elvis Presley began basic training at Fort Chaffee. In 1975 the facility was used as a relocation center for more than 25,000 Vietnamese refugees. In 1980 it was used for Cuban refugees and between 1987 and 1993, it housed the Joint Readiness Training Center. At different times in its history, it has also been used for the filming of several movies.

In 1993 Fort Chaffee was re-organized and scaled down as part of the national base restructuring that occurred across the country. In 1995, the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission recommended the closure of Fort Chaffee with the condition that minimum essential range facilities and training areas be maintained as a reserve training facility. In 1997 Fort Chaffee was restructured to occupy 63,600 acres as the Fort Chaffee Maneuver Training Center. Approximately 7,100 acres of Fort Chaffee land was identified for disposal by the Department of Defense. Shortly after Fort Chaffee was selected for

closure, the Sebastian County government established a Local Redevelopment Authority (LRA) to initiate reuse planning. In 1995 and 1996, more than 16 different committees were established to examine issues associated with redevelopment of the land disposed of by the military. In 1997, the Fort Chaffee Redevelopment Authority Public Trust (FCRA) was created by Sebastian County and the Cities of Barling, Fort Smith and Greenwood, as the exclusive implementing local development authority (LRA) recognized by the Secretary of Defense.

The Comprehensive Reuse Plan for Fort Chaffee was adopted in 1999. After a careful review of existing site issues, land use alternatives and numerous public meetings, a preferred land use plan for Fort Chaffee decommissioned land was proposed. The process of acquiring, implementing and developing this large land area was outlined.

In 1999 the Economic Development Conveyance (EDC) Application was prepared, outlining the Operations and Business Plan (O/B Plan) for Plan implementation. Based on a 15-year financial analysis (proforma) changes were made to the Reuse plan .



Chaffee Crossing Landmark Feature

Between the approval of the EDC Application in 1999 and 2002, the transfer and conveyance of land commenced, zoning was established, a design review board was created, and annexation agreements with the Cities of Barling and Fort Smith were reached.

In final agreement of annexation, roughly 6,990 acres of land was added to the City of Fort Smith in 2002. While the FCRA retains control and authority over development of Chaffee land, as part of the city, the planning and design of this large land area is in coordination with the overall plan of the city.

2.4.4 Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ)

Arkansas cities have planning and zoning authority outside of their municipal boundaries. While there are other states and cities with similar laws, they are all a little different in the relationships, requirements and government organization between County and City. This is state enabling law was put in place due to the rural nature and limited government of most Arkansas counties. Municipalities with planning commissions may extend their "Territorial Jurisdiction", or planning authority, up to five miles from their line of incorporation (A.C.A. Sec. 14-56-413(a)(1)(A)). The law further provides for extended jurisdiction of cities whose boundaries are restricted by rivers and streams. A city of between 50,000 and 150,000 population on a navigable stream has the ability to extend its planning authority up to two miles beyond its corporate limits. (A.C.A. Sec. 14-56-413(a)(2) A)(ii).)

The City of Fort Smith defined a Planning Area Boundary in 1991 and amended the zoning ordinance and municipal code to reflect jurisdiction over this area. Since that time the city has exercised only limited control and review over the Planning Area.

Relatively few issues have come up to test the city's use of its extra-territorial jurisdiction. While counties can establish and exercise planning and zoning authority they rarely do, as this would require them to establish planning commissions, planning and zoning, and hire administrative and professional staff. The ETJ area is defined in coordination with the county and neighboring jurisdictions.

In order for the city to exercise jurisdiction over land outside of its corporate limits, several public actions need to occur:

- 1) The land area to be covered by extra-territorial jurisdiction needs to be defined
- 2) A map is filed with the City Clerk and County recorder
- 3) A master street plan for the land area is prepared and adopted
- 4) A land use, zoning and community facilities plan for the area is prepared and adopted.

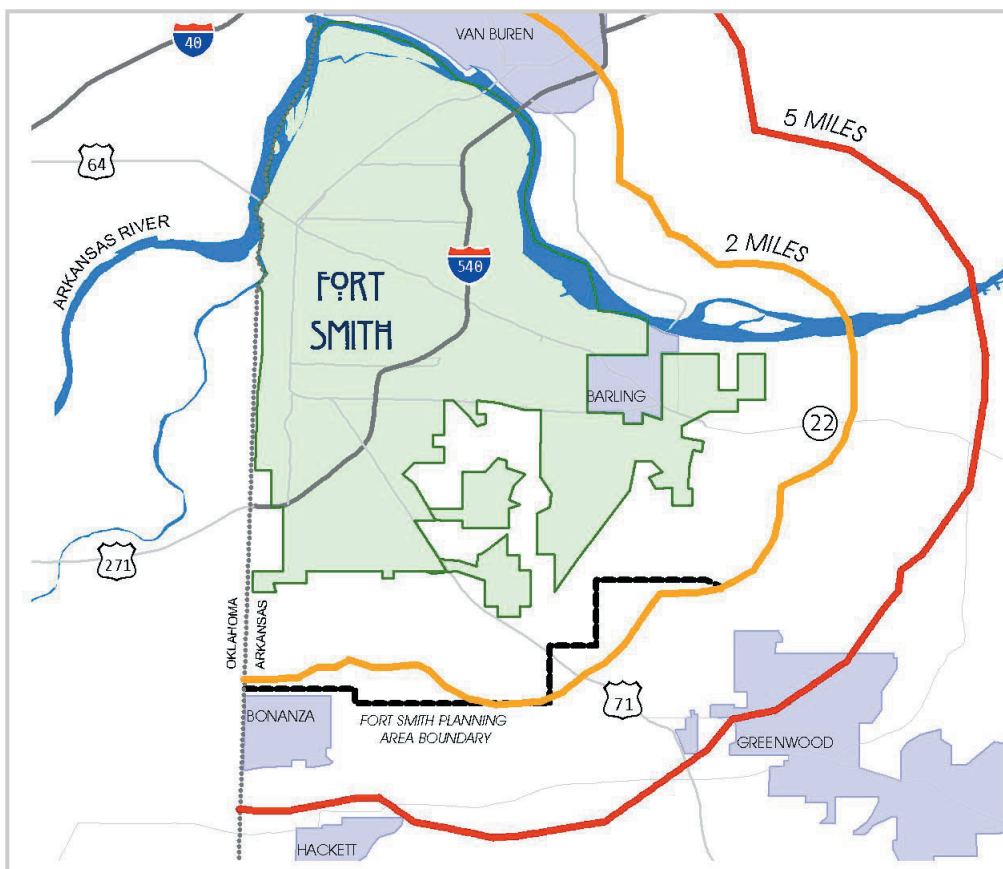
In adopting the Planning Area Boundary in 1991, the city conducted steps one and two, but due to many factors, never acted on step three. A master street plan was prepared but never acted upon.

While this land area remains unincorporated Sebastian County, due to its relationship with the city, development of the area falls under the jurisdiction of the City of Fort Smith. The city may adopt and enforce land use and zoning powers, subdivision regulations, street and drainage standards, and building permits. Because relatively few cities in the state have worked with this provision in the law, there are few good examples of how to most effectively and fairly administer this exercise of jurisdiction.

Several areas of concern have been raised:

- Existing home businesses - how to classify and zone appropriately.
- Administration of land use, subdivision and other permit processes and inspections (to ensure permits are being drawn for development) increases demands on currently understaffed city departments.
- Communication of planning, zoning, subdivision and permitting to land owners and residents in the ETJ area.
- Representation by non-residents of Fort Smith in matters potentially affecting them.

City of Fort Smith Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ)





SECTION 3

Visioning, Goals and Alternatives

SECTION 3

Visioning, Goals and Alternatives

After reaching consensus on community issues, the Steering Committee formed citywide goals to address these issues. Through a series of workshops, open houses and presentations to organizations, a set of goals and the strategies needed to achieve the goals were formed. As part of these work sessions, an agreement on a vision and direction for the city was reached. This section outlines the basis for the Comprehensive Plan Framework—"The City of Neighborhoods."

VISION

Fort Smith is a diversified regional community, serving a growing population, while promoting a high quality of life.

3.1 GOALS

Goal 1. Achieve a coordinated transportation and land use plan.

Approach: Develop a transportation plan that reserves land in future corridors, prioritizes available funds, functions consistently with the land use plan, and capitalizes on assets such as the public transportation system, river, and highway network. Emphasis should be on connectivity, flexibility (choices of transportation modes), and aesthetic and environmental impacts. (Section 4.2 and Section 4.1)

Goal 2. Improve the function and aesthetics of commercial corridors.

Approach: Implement plans for long-term improvement of commercial corridors addressing both the function and aesthetics of prime commercial corridors. (Section 4.2)

Goal 3. Develop a coordinated, city economic development strategy.

Approach: Initiate proactive steps in cooperation with area Chambers of Commerce, Eastern Oklahoma, Northwest Arkansas, University of Arkansas-Fort Smith, and other institutions for targeted economic development. (Section 4.3)

Goal 4. Protect and improve existing neighborhoods.

Approach: Create a friendly but stringent development ordinances, rigorously applied throughout the community, to protect existing neighborhoods and create strong new ones. (Section 4.4)

Goal 5. Expand city parkland and recreational programming to reflect or exceed national standards.

Approach: Take advantage of underutilized space, create a variety of recreation opportunities, and continue to pursue, expand, and implement current park plans. (Section 4.5)

Goal 6. Protect natural resources and reduce waste and overuse.

Approach: Inventory, establish resource and pollutant goals, work with state, federal and environmental organizations, and amend and enforce city ordinances. (Section 4.6)

Goal 7. Adopt design standards and a city signature look for public improvements.

Approach: Take advantage of current momentum in creating the "look of Fort Smith" and translate community support for quality urban design into consistent, enforceable design standards that leverages public and private investments as incentives for more investment in quality urban design. (Section 4.7)

Goal 8. Revitalize downtown into a multipurpose activity center.

Approach: Create an AM/PM activity center with a consistent image and strategy for redevelopment. Identify opportunities for public participation, and establish incentives and market niche strategies. (Section 5.1)

Goal 9. Regain city access to the Arkansas Riverfront.

Approach: Acquire the necessary property and create specific design plans that make the riverfront accessible to citizens of Fort Smith. Make the river a community-friendly environment. (Section 5.2)

Goal 10. Coordinate and plan future development with neighboring jurisdictions.

Approach: Develop better relationships among the City, County, and private developers to ensure compatible development patterns inside and outside of the City, and mitigate or eliminate physical and economic barriers that may create inefficient land use and development patterns. (Section 5.4)



Steering Committee Meeting



Discussing Vision & Goals

3.2 ALTERNATIVES

By evaluating different future development scenarios, the Steering Committee had a better understanding of the choices facing them. Four alternatives were developed based on current trends and development patterns currently at work in Fort Smith, and elsewhere in the county: 1. Current Trends; 2. Edge City; 3. Core Focused; and, 4. City of Villages. Each alternative paints a picture of how development, investment and disinvestment can occur, based on public policy. It also indicates what the character of that development, land use and transportation could be.

Because public policy is a driving force in land development patterns, it was important to evaluate some of the trade-offs and choices that can be made as a community. Some of those trends, trade-offs and considerations are listed below.

3.2.1 Planning Considerations

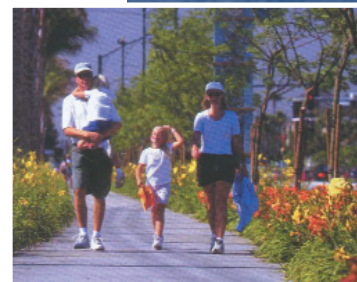
Fort Smith Development Forces and Trends:

- New housing occurring at the City's edge and in surrounding counties and small towns.
- Growing non-English speaking population, primarily in the school age years, locating in the center of the City.
- Low residential owner-occupancy in the central core.
- High commercial vacancy rate in downtown and older commercial corridor locations.
- The emergence of the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith as a four-year institution of higher education.
- New commercial retail and industrial development growing south and east, at the edge along major corridors, primarily Rogers Avenue and U.S.71.
- Major public investment occurring along transportation corridors and in the downtown.
- Fort Chaffee annexation — a multi-million dollar investment in infrastructure.
- Fort Chaffee concept of jobs to housing balance - one job/one house.
- High in commuting population for jobs and services.
- Industrial job base — high land consumption to employee ratio, high rail and truck transportation, and water demands in central city and corridor locations.

Section 3 - Visioning, Goals and Alternatives

National Development Forces and Trends

- Service oriented economy — high employee to building ratio, high rush hour Single Occupancy Vehicle (SOV) commuting, central city, corridor and outlying office park locations.
- Downtowns are being reprogrammed to entertainment, office and residential mixed-use.
- Waterfronts rediscovered for trails, recreation, institutions, boutique retail and dining.
- "New Urbanism" — pedestrian oriented, medium density residential with live/work and some mixture of uses (office, retail, sundries, dining).
- Acknowledged growing diversity of the population with diverse housing needs:
 - "empty nesters" not wanting to maintain large homes and yards
 - two home "snow birds" and seasonal residences
 - "footloose" employment — telecommuting, cottage industries and non-traditional employment
 - Overall smaller family and household (HH) size (this varies by ethnicity)
 - In 2000, more than 30% of all households were singles living alone — of all ages
 - Aging "baby boomers" with different demands in quality of life
- Malls are down in demand and being torn-down and re-created. "Power Centers" — "Big Box", high-volume general retailers and service-oriented boutiques are in demand. Discount stores and quality retail are strong, reflecting demand at both ends of the market.
- Public/private partnerships and creative financing have several decades of practice.
- "All American Cities" and "Best Places to Live" national awards and surveys constantly rate the quality of the living environment as key in keeping and attracting people to a city. Recreation, low-crime, diverse employment and entertainment, recession proof economy, cultural richness, friendly and responsible government, and cost of living usually rank highest.
- Corporate dispersion and increased public and private security issues since September 11th, 2001 — Neighborhood watch, sense of community, knowing your neighbors, water quality and drinking water protection, stable and long term energy sources, hazardous waste, and emergency communications awareness have been the focus of communities in recent years.



Recreational Trend

SOURCE: URBAN LAND INSTITUTE



Pedestrian Oriented Streetscape

3.2.2 Alternative Futures

CURRENT TRENDS

This alternative assumes no changes in current policies and land development practices. It assumes that efforts currently in the works (Fort Chaffee, I-49, public investment in infrastructure, convention center, etc.) continue, and that private investments and disinvestments continue in the same pattern of outward migration along major transportation corridors.

Some effort would be made in the downtown and riverfront. This alternative would be the easiest of the four to achieve.

Characteristics

Auto-oriented commerce and associated high traffic congestion; high in-commuting for jobs and services; and, continued decline and increased vacancy rates in the existing built area in favor of developing new lands.

- Commercial growth would continue along major corridors with the emphasis on auto oriented commerce.
- Private investment would continue to determine development patterns.
- New residential growth would be focused on new land to the south and Fort Chaffee.
- Private disinvestment would continue in the downtown and core neighborhoods.
- In-commuting from surrounding counties and towns would continue to grow as the quality and/or price of housing in the city does not meet the demand. (Using services and facilities but paying no income or property tax. - Sales tax is the only recuperation.)
- The I-49 "by-pass" would naturally push development further out, away from the central core, creating new high demand intersections.
- Continued fragmentation of city and neighborhoods.
- Current public and private synergy and investments would continue to be unfocused and reactionary.

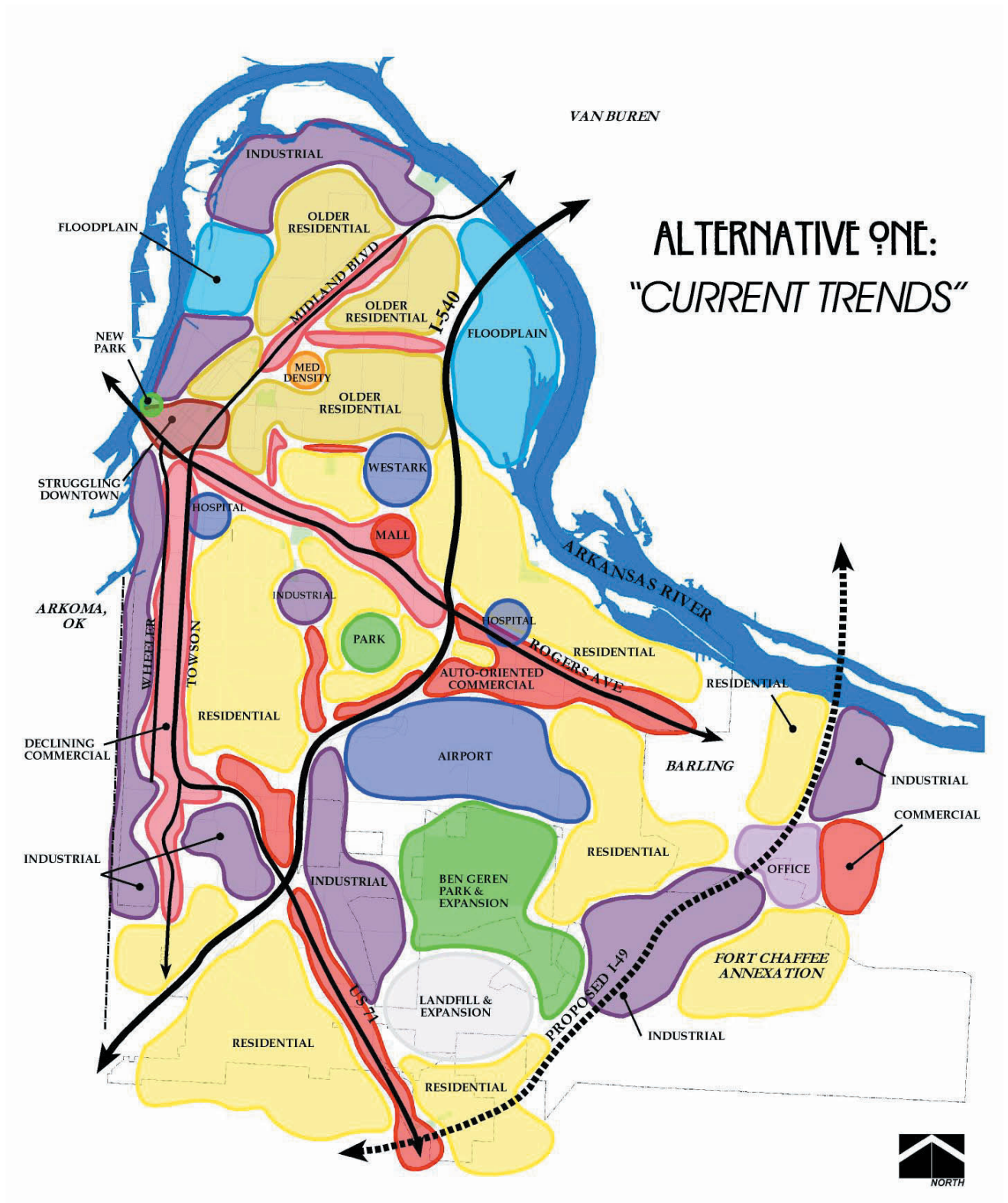


Disinvestment in "core" areas

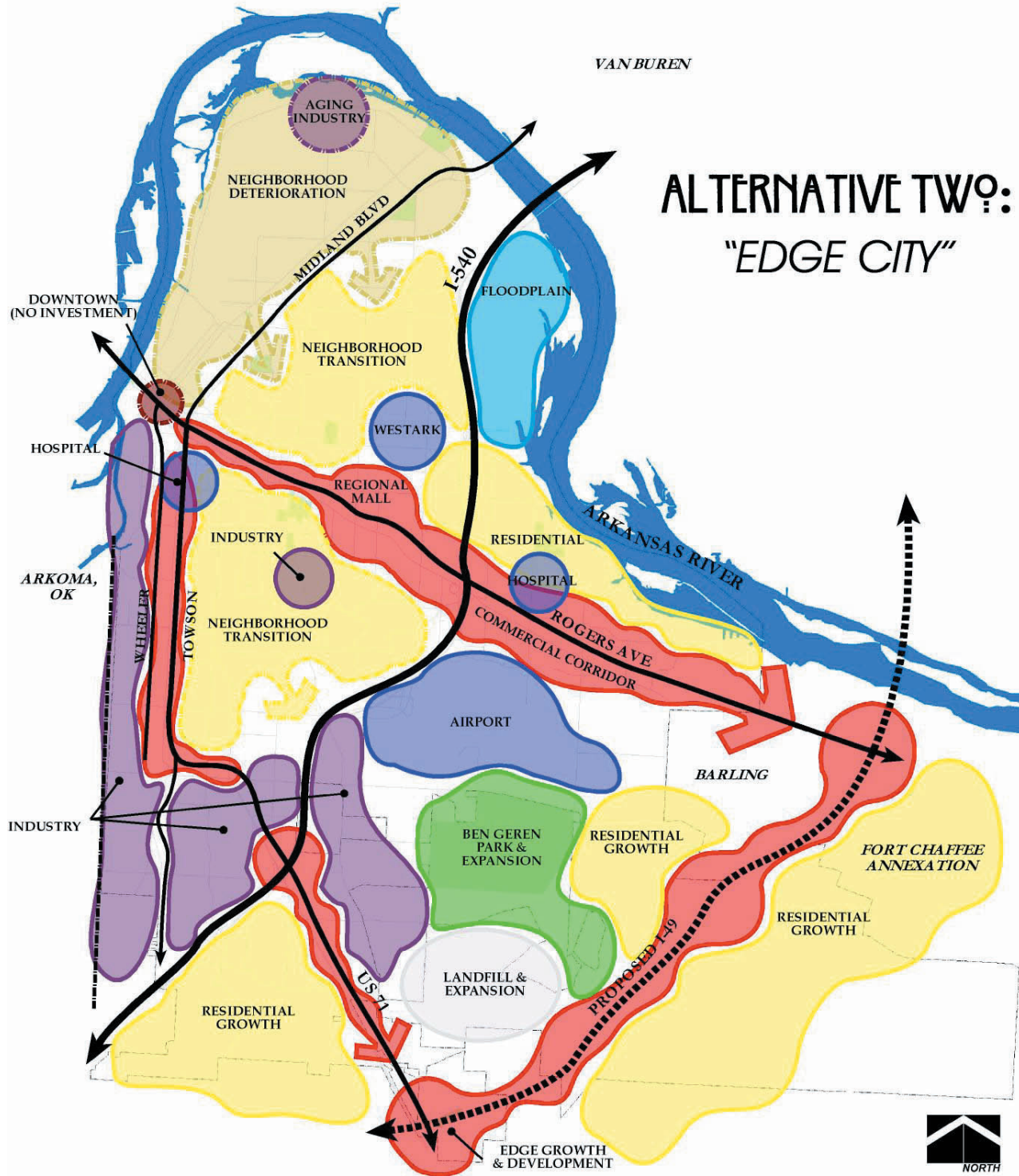


Commercial growth along major corridors

CURRENT TRENDS



EDGE CITY



EDGE CITY

This alternative was similar to “Current Trends” in that investment and development were focused at the growing edge rather than in the older, existing City. Expansion would be aided by the annexation of nearby Fort Chaffee and the construction of proposed Interstate 49. Auto-oriented “big box” commercial growth would occur at the newly created I-49 junctions U.S. 71. Commercial and industrial areas along Midland Boulevard, Towson Avenue, Wheeler Avenue and Kelley Highway would also be negatively affected. Surrounding residential neighborhoods would also experience deterioration due to lack of reinvestment in the aging housing building stock. With the “Edge City” focus, the priority of available funds or monies would be put towards expansion of utilities and services. Policies and public and private actions would be focused outward on these new lands.

Characteristics

- Heavy additional cost burden would exist for new infrastructure, for both public and private sectors.
- Investments would keep moving to the edge, furthering the decline of the core and devaluing existing central city development.
- New residential growth would be concentrated to new land to the south and Fort Chaffee.
- Development patterns would focus away from the Arkansas River and the downtown.
- Emphasis on auto-oriented development would increase, as well as in-commuting from surrounding communities.
- The downtown would become single-function in nature (convention tourism), not fully integrated with the rest of the city.
- Development of I-49 would be the catalyst for “Edge City”.
- The Current Trend of continued commercial corridor growth would be supported.
- It would make it easier for existing industry to expand facilities in the urban core.
- Marketability of Fort Chaffee, the Airport, I-540, US 71 South and “leap-frog” County development would be enhanced.



Greenfield development



“Big-box” growth



Auto-oriented growth

CORE FOCUSED

In contrast to Edge City, policies, investments and actions are focused on the existing built area, in the center of the city. The emphasis in a Core Focused plan is a renaissance of the downtown, riverfront, older existing neighborhoods and commercial corridors. Instead of placing priority, time, money and effort on fast-tracking I-49 and Fort Chaffee development, resources are reinvested in renovation of existing developed land. Edge expansion is slow growing, and staged for 10 to 20 years out as the central city becomes stabilized and re-energized. Constraints, limits and timing elements are placed on expansion.



Celebrates local history

Characteristics

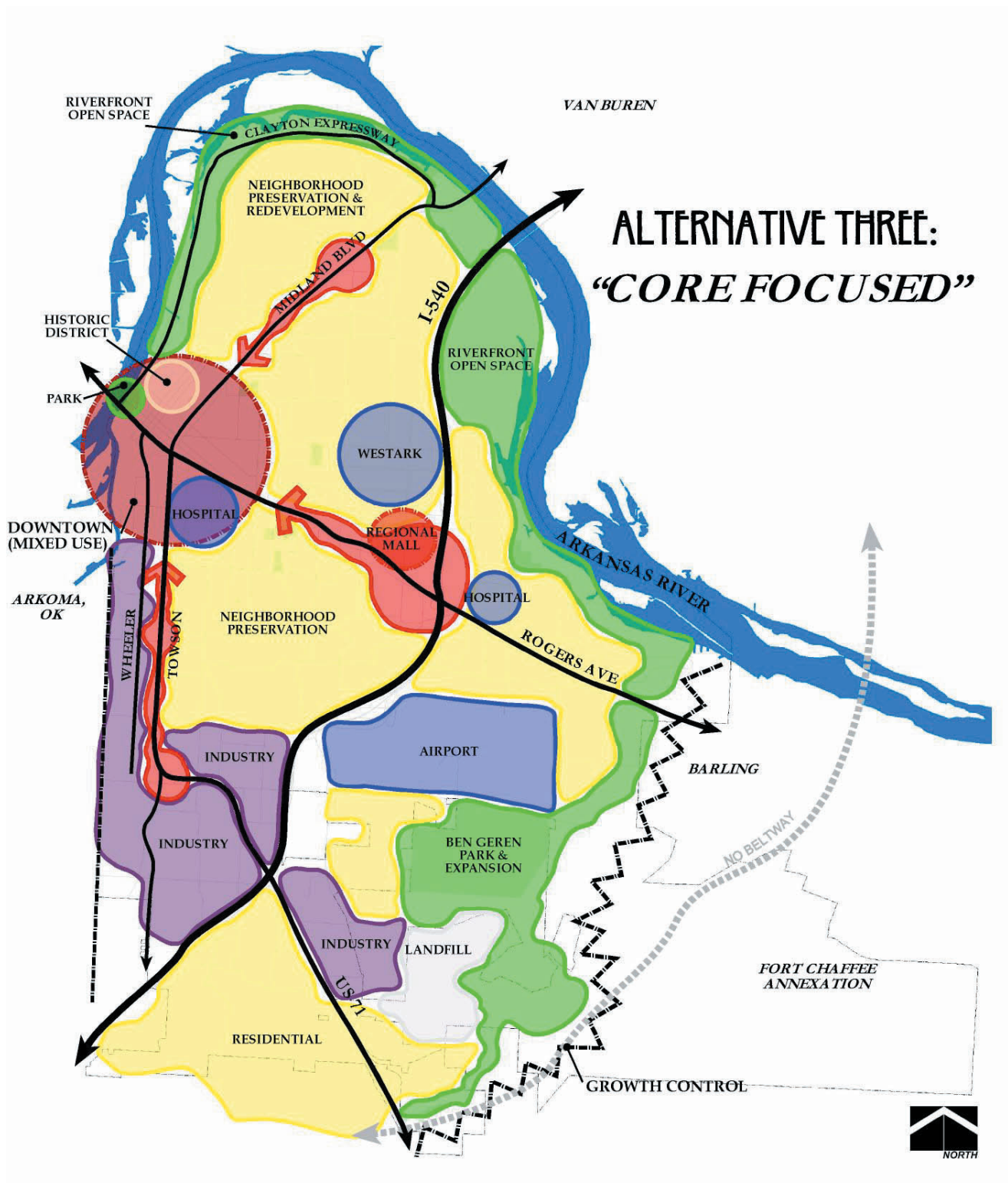
Public and private investment focused on the downtown and in the central city; maximized use of existing infrastructure and investments; emphasis on infill, redevelopment, renovation and retrofit of the existing underutilized and abandoned commercial, industrial and residential land; and, promotion of pedestrian-oriented development.



Downtown Reinvestment

- The history, heritage and character of Fort Smith would be celebrated.
- Long-range goals for Fort Chaffee, Phoenix Avenue, Airport and I-49 development would be set.
- Public and private investment would be focused on the downtown and in the existing City.
- Downtown and the central city would become major destinations for entertainment, services, jobs, and housing, offering choices for all ages and incomes.
- Maximize existing infrastructure and investments, place limits on new extensions of services and facilities, maximizing reinvestment and maintenance of existing facilities.
- Provides for, and encourages multi-modal transportation systems designed for people instead of cars. Would promote pedestrian-oriented activities.
- Some industrial land uses and zoning would evolve to other uses, such as office or mixed-use.
- Land uses and commercial activity along corridors would become complementary to downtown activities, not competition.
- Infill, redevelopment, renovation and retrofit of the existing underutilized and abandoned commercial, industrial and residential land would be emphasized.

CORE FOCUSED



CITY OF VILLAGES



Pedestrian commercial areas

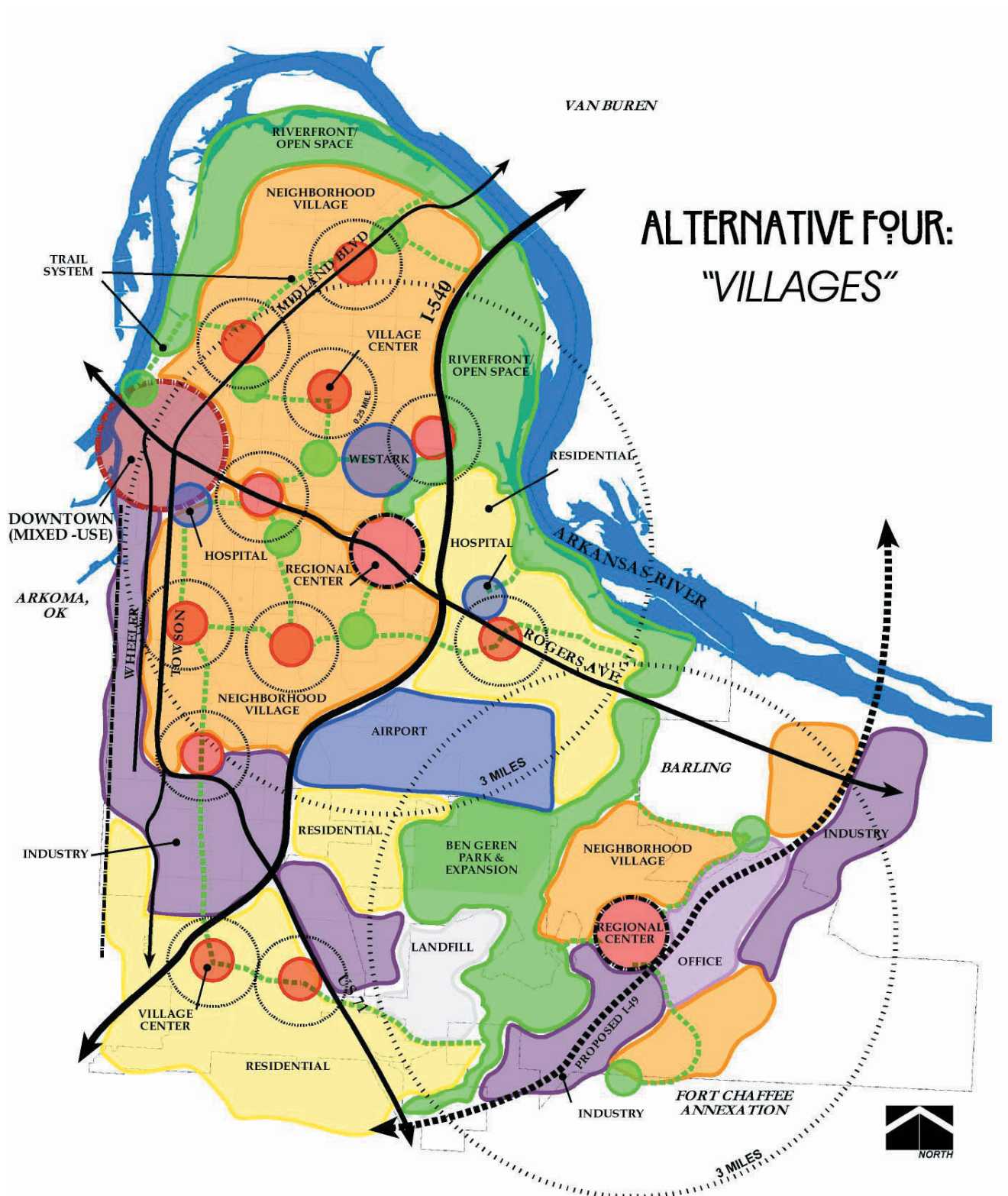
Alternative Four envisioned Fort Smith as a city of villages. A hierarchy of villages would be located throughout the city. A walk/bike trail system would be incorporated with the intent to connect the centers, surrounding neighborhoods and parks with each other. Each would be different, offering complimentary services, gathering places and a focal point for investments, actions and policies. This alternative combines elements from both the Edge City and Core Focused alternatives, channeling actions both internally to the existing built area, as well as in new lands. This alternative is more difficult to achieve, as it requires high levels of coordination, community participation, strategic decision-making, public-private partnerships, and area-specific physical land planning and design.

Characteristics

Emphasis is on infill, redevelopment, renovation and retrofit of the existing underutilized and abandoned commercial, industrial and residential land; promotion of pedestrian-oriented development; allows for the most flexibility in development types for both existing built areas as well as new lands; and, provides more diverse and balanced public and private investment opportunities throughout the community.

- Public spaces and trails would be incorporated.
- Requires a high level of public/private partnership, coordination and a proactive city government.
- Encourages alternative transportation methods and pedestrian-oriented activities.
- Hierarchy and priority areas would be created to complement each other.
- Requires a high level of design review and area guidelines to be established — village plans.
- Promote downtown as a regional village.
- Promote neighborhood concepts.
- Emphasizes a “sense of place”, incorporating city heritage and redesign of existing developed areas.
- Emphasizes infill, redevelopment, renovation and retrofit of the existing built area.
- Allows for the most flexibility in development types, creating diverse public and private investment opportunities.
- Allows for a variety of village types and orientations.
- Allows for more balanced development opportunities throughout the city.

CITY OF VILLAGES



3.3 PLAN FRAMEWORK

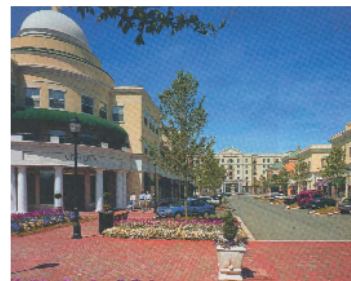
The City of Neighborhoods Comprehensive Plan

During the winter and spring of 2001/2002, the alternative development scenarios were debated, with a preferred plan direction, or "Hybrid Alternative", emerging from areas of consensus. In their pure form, none of them was desirable. The City of Villages was by far the most preferred development plan, but it was felt to be too difficult to achieve and may further fragment the city. Fifth and sixth alternatives were created that merged concepts and concerns expressed by residents. There were many decision-making factors to consider and several consistent plan themes that helped form the plan framework — the City of Neighborhoods. The ability of each of the alternatives to meet the proposed comprehensive plan goals was discussed at length. The City of Neighborhoods emerged from these discussions, and incorporated many of the elements of the City of Villages, Core Focused and Edge City.

“City of Villages emphasizes infill, redevelopment, renovation, and retrofit of the existing underutilized and abandoned land”



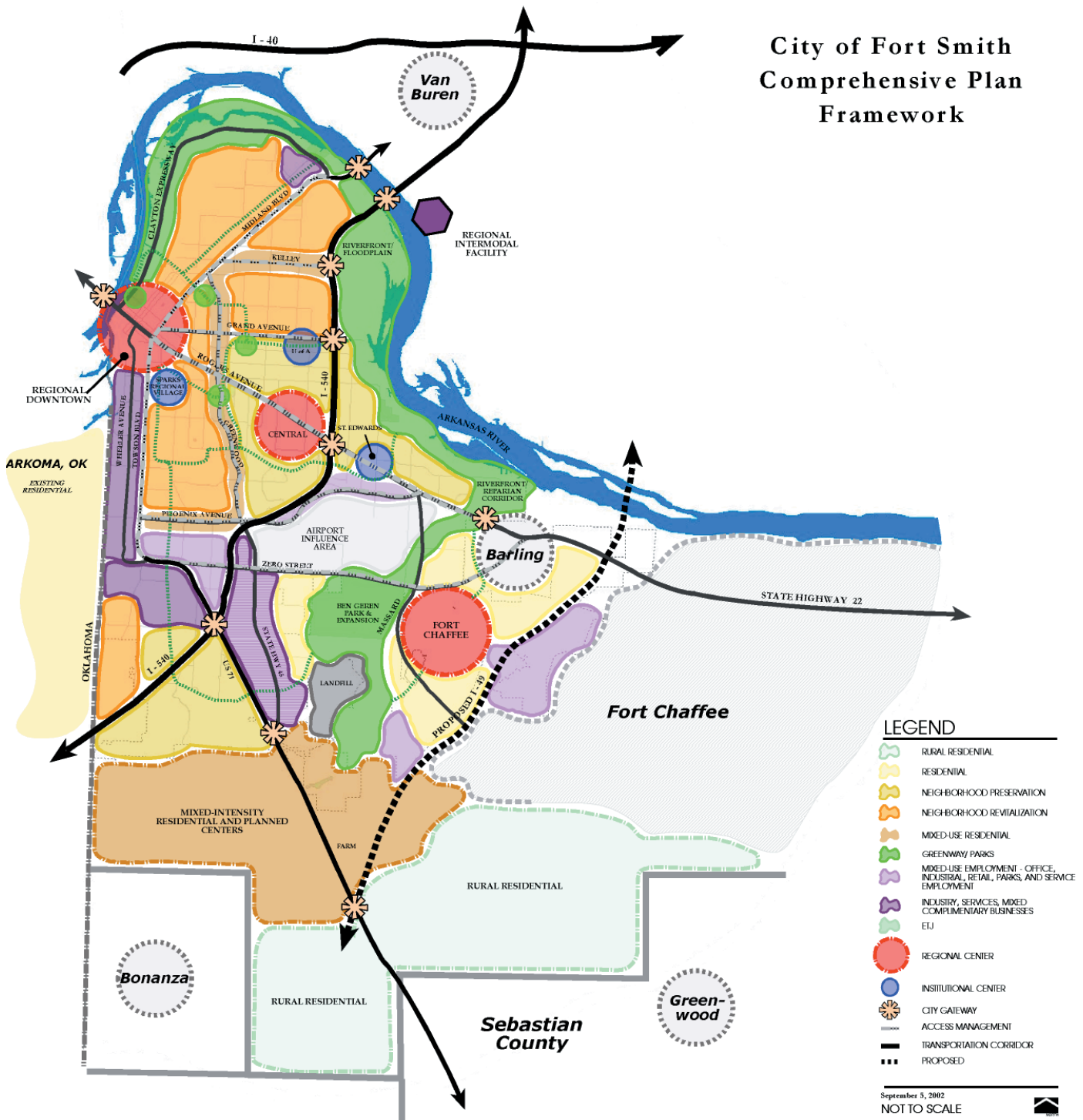
Incorporate public spaces



Pedestrian oriented shopping
SOURCE: URBAN LAND INSTITUTE

CITY OF NEIGHBORHOODS

City of Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan Framework



Section 3 - Visioning, Goals and Alternatives

Consistent Plan Themes

- Downtown redevelopment promoted
- Revitalize existing commercial corridors
- Walkable "villages" or "centers" concept for both new (Fort Chaffee) and existing neighborhoods
- Hybrid of "City of Villages," "Core Focused," and "Edge City" alternatives
- Promotion of technical and service jobs in downtown and Fort Chaffee
- Revitalize existing neighborhoods
- Gain public access to the river
- Incorporate a linear greenway and park system into plan
- Review industrially zoned land for existing and future needs and adjacent land use compatibility
- Capitalize on rich Fort Smith history and Arkansas River location, for expanded convention tourism, special events and sports.
- Retain educated youth by creating diverse urban lifestyles, cultural opportunities, attractive, abundant recreational opportunities, and higher-wage, professional employment.
- Protect natural resources
- Given the fact that the existing and future population of both the City and region can absorb only so much commercial activity, it should be concentrated in specific areas
- Given that there is only so much money available for transportation and other city infrastructure and services, it should be concentrated in areas of existing inadequate infrastructure and service, while developing and programming for long-term expansion needs to Fort Chaffee and the Planning Influence Area in Sebastian County



Reinvest in downtown



Better access to river



Preservation of resources

Framework

The development framework sets the physical guidelines for how Fort Smith will evolve in the next 10-20 years. It provides a structure and guidelines for land use, transportation and zoning actions. While the areas indicated are general in nature, it is the first step in unifying the land use plan with new zoning and subdivision regulations. This framework is the basis for a land use plan.

CITY OF NEIGHBORHOODS LEGEND AND LAND USE

“Centers” or “Villages” are concentrated areas of pedestrian-oriented, mixed land use. They offer a variety of daily services that are more people, than car, oriented, and provide a focal point, or pocket of activity within an area for meeting people, shopping and accessing public services. They will occur in a variety of scales, serving different, distinct and complementary needs for the people of the City and larger region.

Regional Centers offer the highest density and diversity of employment, culture, services, shopping, housing and entertainment to the region as a whole. Walkability within these centers is key to their design and function. There is a need to limit the number of regional-scale centers based on complimentary services and function within the region. There are three primary Regional Centers: Downtown, Central Mall and Fort Chaffee, each serving a distinct need .

Institutional Centers specialize in community service , and have a high priority for regional transportation access with service equal to that of regional centers. Emergency access and commuter and visitor parking should be part of an overall circulation plan. Complementary services need to be provided within walking distance, as these areas can be 24-hour communities. There are three primary Institutional Centers: University of Arkansas-Fort Smith; St. Edward Mercy Medical; and Sparks Health System.

Neighborhood Centers are small in scale and designed to meet the immediate needs of people living or working within close proximity. Generally, they provide a collection of shops, services and/or recreation that are a focal point of the neighborhood, offering the needs of daily living. Walking and bicycling should be safe options to access these areas. Kids and people of all ages should feel safe and comfortable.

The Road Network

Residential Corridors are roadways through primarily residential and institutional areas that may have been classified as arterials in the adopted 1991 Master Street Plan. Over time they have become heavily used for through traffic. Special design considerations are needed in order to protect the residential character and values along them. As residential streets, they may be reclassified as Primary Collectors. Examples include: portions of Old Greenwood Avenue, Jenny Lind Road, and Free Ferry Road.

Boulevards — By partially restoring or establishing a landscaped boulevard system, the roadway will function at a higher capacity through improved chanelization. They will provide an attractive path through and into town and increase the visibility and viability of the businesses located along them. These would include Midland Boulevard, portions of Towson Avenue, and U.S. highway 71/71B South.

“Neighborhood Centers are small in scale and designed to meet the immediate needs of people living or working within close proximity.”

CITY OF NEIGHBORHOODS LEGEND AND LAND USE

Commercial Corridors — The majority of arterials in Fort Smith provide the commercial space in the City. In the future, these areas will be designed to reduce auto conflicts, consolidate shopping entrances, reduce sign confusion and increase the viability of businesses along arterials. The primary example of this designation is Rogers Avenue.



Create people places

Transportation Corridors — The main function of these facilities is to move vehicles between major destinations or through town. Land access is secondary to their purpose; examples include I-540 and U.S. Highway 71 South.



Maximize destinations

Gateways — The major entry points into the City that create a visitor's first impression. Arrival and departure indicators, views of the City, view corridors, and way finding need to be addressed at these major points.

Planned Mixed-Use Development

Mixed-use Residential — A compatible mix of housing types and commercial and institutional services characterize mixed-use residential areas. The primary theme of these areas is to increase the compatibility of a mixture of activities through better planning and design. Many areas of the city currently have a mixture of housing types and commercial uses, but they are not visually or functionally compatible with each other. This category can be applied to neighborhood centers or to

roadways. New areas will emerge, such as west Phoenix Avenue, Kelley Highway and Massard Road south, and fall into this category.

Mixed-use Employment — These areas are characterized by a complementary mix of industrial and office uses that can combine parking, circulation, security, employee amenities and services. These are major employment destinations that can benefit from close proximity to each other, and economies of scale in infrastructure and service provision for both the city and employers. In addition, employees benefit by having services in close proximity.

Residential

Neighborhood Preservation — These are existing, predominately residential areas whose character and value need to be protected, enhanced and/or restored.

Neighborhood Revitalization — These are existing, predominately residential areas whose character and value are to be enhanced and restored through proactive measures and perhaps with both public and private assistance. These neighborhoods have deteriorated through abandonment of structures and/or encroachment of industrial and commercial uses that have negatively affected the value of residential property for residential use. In some cases, these areas may have a high percentage of renters to owners, and may have many structures in poor repair or boarded up and vacant.

Residential — Indicated on the Plan Framework, these are new and developing housing developments at a variety of densities and styles, not identified yet as either an area of revitalization or preservation. These areas are still defining themselves and have the opportunity to expand and more solidly form their character.

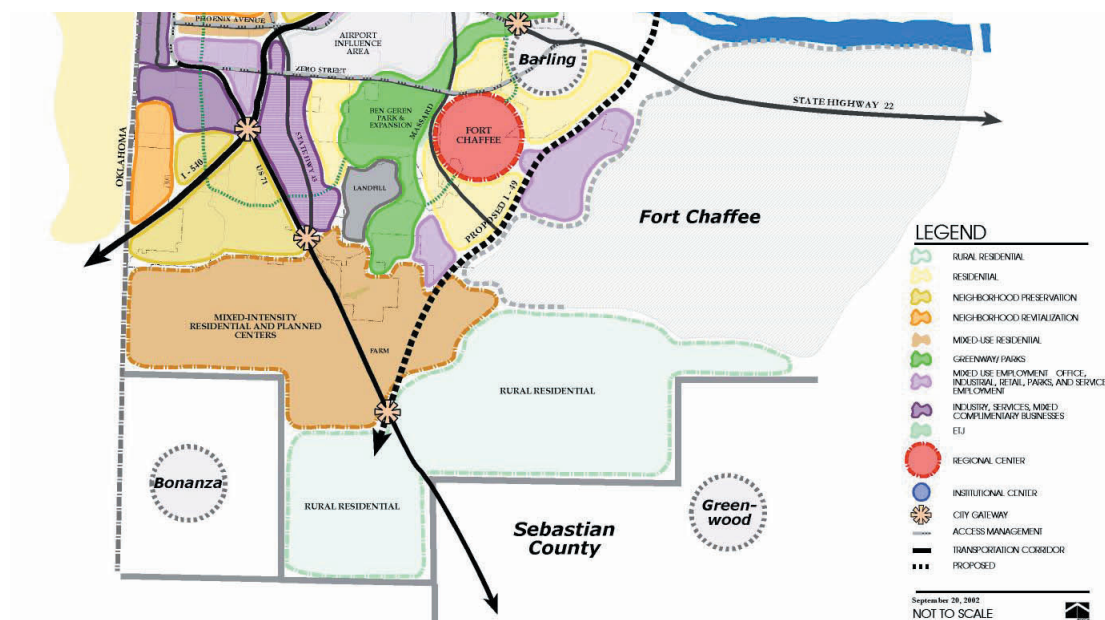
Rural Residential — Rural land areas are only indicated in the area outside of the existing City limits. Rural development is very low density, reflecting a desire to have few neighbors and a love of the land. Lot sizes are typically 5 to 25 acres in size, unless a cluster method of development is used to maximize open space.

Parks, Open Space & Trails — These uses are a primary theme of the plan, taking advantage of the lush environment that makes Fort Smith a great place to live. Passive and active recreation, habitat and bird sanctuary spaces, wetlands and regional trail systems,

represent the high quality of life that is an intrinsic part of the "Look of Fort Smith".

Floodplain, Bluffs & Natural Resources — Wetlands, floodplains, and riparian corridors flow into the Arkansas and Poteau Rivers, making land areas unsuitable for most development (regardless of historic zoning). The Ozark geology also creates pockets of natural gas and rock formations that restrict most forms of development. These areas need to be studied and identified in greater detail.

Extra-Territorial Planning Influence Area — This area is currently in agriculture and rural residential use within Sebastian County, and does not have planning, zoning, subdivision, or building permit requirements to govern development. By state law, the city needs to work with the county on planning for these areas, so that development occurs in a way that is compatible and economical. The Plan proposes a process to work with all affected parties to adequately plan for these areas. (Sections 4.1 & 5.4)



Section 3 - Visioning, Goals and Alternatives

Decision Making Factors

- The existing and future population, City and region can absorb only so much commercial activity. Will it be concentrated or dispersed?
- There is only so much money available for transportation and other city infrastructure and services. Where and how will it be spent?
- There is only so much money available to individuals and investors. Where and how will that money be invested?
- There will only be so much growth in jobs, households and the economy, in the next 10 to 20 years. Where and how will that occur? Concentrated or dispersed?
- How proactive do we want to be in implementation of the Plan?
- How difficult will it be to achieve?
- What ideas and concepts do people like the most?
- How much effort, cooperation and coordination will be required?



Reinvest in older areas

The Plan Framework:

- Provides more desirable, diverse lifestyle opportunities;
- Revitalizes existing areas, and adds value to all areas spreading resources citywide;
- Implements, embodies, the "look of Fort Smith";
- Utilizes the existing infrastructure;
- Creates Centers - Pockets of Activity — "places" to go, people-friendly places;
- Promotes an attractive commercial mix - meeting all needs, lifestyles and income levels;
- Encourages more landscaping and city beautification;
- Requires less travel from home to work and shopping;
- Is environmentally friendly, using fewer resources;
- Will provide a "sense of community";
- Accommodates diverse ages, incomes and ethnicity;
- Requires redesign of zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations; and,
- Plans for new development and sets new standards in development.

*"How proactive do
we want to be in
implementation of
the plan?"*



SECTION 4

Plan Framework

SECTION 4

Plan Framework

Because this is the City's first Comprehensive Plan, it cannot lay out parcel-specific proposed land use changes throughout the city. Rather, it is the first step in creating a proposed land use plan that shows a change in land use from what is existing today, to what is the preferred development pattern for tomorrow. In the following chapters, policies and actions state how existing and future land use patterns need to be addressed, and further indicate how land use, development and design need to change to implement the plan. The City of Neighborhoods provides both a physical framework and a policy framework that go hand in hand.

The Plan Framework provides the basis for future land use and design changes within the City. Section 4 establishes policies and actions that together will address each of the issues the City is currently facing. Many policies are city wide in nature and do not address specific land uses or areas of the City, while others are more specific to uses, activities, and locations. Several actions and policies overlap, achieving multiple goals.

4.1 LAND USE AND ZONING

The City of Neighborhoods requires implementation of policies, changes to the development codes of the city and specific area plans to be created. Section 4.1 outlines the process and elements needed in planning land use, development and zoning, which are fundamental in implementing the City of Neighborhoods. Area planning and changes to the existing land regulations are the two main government elements that will change the nature of growth and development in the City.

4.1.1 Area Land Use Planning

Area plans emphasize land use and design issues for specific areas of land. Planning for a district of the City differs from the comprehensive plan in that it is parcel specific and much more detailed, almost like a development plan for a parcel of land. Area, Sector, District, Corridor, Neighborhood and Center Plans can be any size, but are focused on meeting a distinct purpose called out in the Comprehensive Plan.

4.1.1 Area Land Use Planning

For instance, the redevelopment of downtown calls for a unified vision of how all the buildings will contribute to the downtown district. Without a plan to serve as a guidebook, property owners and investors have a higher risk and unpredictable results.

Area plans are usually triggered or needed when: disinvestment occurs; there are significant and/or constant changes occurring; when public improvements are needed or planned; when redevelopment opportunities arise; and when large developments are on the horizon. These

conditions are present along all the major corridors and throughout many of the core neighborhoods of the City.

Because of the smaller scale of area plans, property owners, tenants and community groups can work together to make the area more successful. Each area is unique. The City of Neighborhoods calls for three types of area plans: 1) Center Plans, 2) Corridor Plans, and 3) Neighborhood and District Plans. Boundaries for each area have been drawn in a general fashion on the framework map.

A) Center Plans - Regional, Institutional, and Neighborhood

Center Plans establish focal points of concentrated activity. The framework outlines three major types of centers—Regional, Institutional and Neighborhood. Regional Centers include Downtown, Central Mall, and Fort Chaffee. Institutional Centers include Sparks Regional Medical Center, St. Edward MMC, and University of Arkansas - Fort Smith

Neighborhood Centers will be determined through neighborhood planning efforts. Examples of neighborhood-serving centers include Fianna Hills Village, and Sunnymede. Neighborhood centers provide convenience goods, personal services and gathering places within a half mile to a mile radius and should not exceed 100,000 square feet in usable retail space or 10 acres of land in size.

A) Center Plans - Regional, Institutional, and Neighborhood

Neighborhood Center - Appropriate uses and amenities include:

- parks, public plaza or recreation facility
- schools, churches or community centers
- libraries and day care
- markets, personal services, clinics or community oriented small offices
- outdoor seating, bicycle parking, sidewalks, trails, or gardens
- single or multi-family residential
- coffee shops, bakery, dry cleaners, drug store, movie rental, music store, dress and specialty shops
- consolidated surface parking and on-street parking
- building height not to exceed 2 stories and drive-through services are discouraged
- Signs are limited to building facades and facades are encouraged to be distinctive

Regional and Institutional Center - Appropriate uses and amenities include: (Same as above with the addition of)

- Major employers
- High-rise, multi-tenant structures
- National and regional retailers
- Transit shelters and service amenities
- Extensive pedestrian environments and circulation
- Extended hours of operation
- Restaurants and entertainment venues
- Way-finding for tourists, visitors and commuters with limited and distinct entryways
- Internal circulation plan that includes consolidated parking, employee parking and clear directional signage.



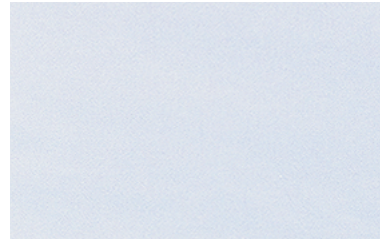
Lakewood, Colorado Town Center

Planning boundaries for all regional centers will be identified through understanding expansion needs goals, issues and plans. Growth of commercial strip corridors will be limited through the establishment of neighborhood, regional, and community centers.

B) Corridor Plans - Commercial, Residential, Transportation, Boulevard and Gateways

Corridor Plans are linear by definition and boundaries of these planning areas usually are a block deep on both sides of the street. Residential land use and values along arterial and collector roadways should be a major consideration in any project and protected where possible. Lot configurations also should be considered in roadway design, access, land use, zoning and corridor planning. Corridor plans are designed to manage access, safety, economic viability and attractiveness. (Corridor Planning is covered more fully in the Transportation Section 4.2) Corridor plans are needed for:

- Rogers Avenue
- Highway 71 South
- Towson Avenue
- Jenny Lind Road
- Midland Boulevard
- Old Greenwood Road
- Grand Avenue



Commercial corridor design options

- Massard Road
- Kelley Highway
- Albert Pike
- Phoenix Avenue
- 10th Street
- Zero Street
- 11th Street
- Waldron Road
- 6th Street
- North 50th Street



landscaping

Corridor Plan elements include:

- Road facility function and purpose
- Access management
- Design and aesthetics
- Service and truck access
- Parking and building set-backs
- Land uses, activities and density
- Storm water management
- Lighting and signage
- Focal points, intersection improvements and cross streets
- Landscaping, maintenance, transit service amenities, and landscaped medians
- Appropriate bicycle, pedestrian and transit circulation plan elements

C) Neighborhood and District Plans

Neighborhoods form the backbone of the community. They come in all shapes and sizes. The District and neighborhood boundaries, with the exception of Fort Chaffee, will be decided through the planning process.

Neighborhood Plans - Revitalizing, Preservation and New Traditional Neighborhoods

Neighborhood associations, in conjunction with the City, will define neighborhood planning areas. (Refer to Section 4.4 for more on neighborhood planning and neighborhood associations.)

Basic neighborhood considerations include:

- Review of zoning patterns and code with existing and preferred development. Historic zoning patterns in most cases do not reflect predominant built patterns, and will be reevaluated on a neighborhood by neighborhood basis for appropriate zone reclassification.
- Pedestrian and bicycle circulation
- Street and drainage conditions
- Parking and through traffic issues
- Neighborhood identity, character and gateways
- Property maintenance and infill development issues
- Neighborhood centers, parks and recreation access
- Emergency preparedness



District Plans - Establish districts of defined activity

Common, predominant activities and goals define districts. Generally, these areas are cohesive with common conditions and issues. These will be mixed-use in nature and will be larger, sub-area plans within the City. They could include:

- Mixed-use Employment Areas
- Airport
- Riverfront
- Fort Chaffee
- Extra Territorial Jurisdiction

District Plan elements include:

- Land use
- All mode circulation
- Infrastructure and service provision
- Design and character
- Air, water, noise, habitat, natural land forms and vegetation and light pollution issues.

D) Planning Process

All plans will follow a basic process and should take between one and six-months in time.

Step One - Information Gathering

- Gather existing land use and zoning inventory and conditions; property ownership patterns; traffic conditions and circulation issues; census tract and block data; and conduct further original research and field work as needed

Step Two - Community and stakeholder involvement

- Community participation through charrette, advisory committee, open house and workshop meetings
- Define or reaffirm boundaries; define or refine purpose or plan; affirm process and identify stakeholders; and other public involvement strategy.

Step Three - Assessment and preliminary recommendations

- Identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT); identify character to be capitalized upon, significant partners, and planned public and private investment.
- Establish a vision for the district and propose alternatives
- Draft the physical area changes to design and land use as appropriate
- Draft area plan with goals and specific actions

Step Four - Adoption and Implementation

- Present plan to Planning Commission and Board of Directors for adoption as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan.

4.1.2 Land Development Regulations

Land development regulations, along with capital improvements funded by the City, are the major elements that shape the land use framework. Land use regulations primarily involve subdivision regulations and zoning ordinances, although environmental regulations at the state or local level may also shape the land use framework.

There is a need to reduce non-compatible land uses through mitigating negative impacts and changes to the zoning language and map designations. For example, industrial and commercial activities as neighbors to housing need sensitive transitions that can be addressed through: lighting, material standards, landscaping, hours of operation, service and loading location, trash location, screening and pick-up, and traffic mitigation. Alternatively, residential uses within predominantly industrial and commercial zones may need to be phased out as inappropriate neighbors.

The zoning code, when revised, should reflect the goals and land use elements of the Comprehensive Plan. The following should be considered: consolidating zones, clarifying purpose, integrating design and transportation standards planning for the two and five mile extra-territorial jurisdiction and understanding current and planned infrastructure capacity.

Wherever possible development requirements should be performance and results-oriented so that the intent and purpose is met, rather than the letter of the law. All revisions to City regulations and future development should address storm water management at the source with concern for water quality and aesthetics. Urban design standards should be inclusive and address incentives for both environmentally friendly as well as aesthetically pleasing designs. Wherever possible all modes of circulation should be considered in all development proposal.

The following is a list of recommended changes to the Fort Smith land development regulations that can allow the Comprehensive Plan to be implemented more effectively. The recommendations are organized into three categories effected by land use regulations — (1) Land Uses and Districts; (2) Streets, Blocks, and Lots; and (3) Site Design. Many of these proposed changes are repeated in further sections of the Plan Framework as policy or actions items

Zoning and Subdivision Regulation Guidelines

A) Land Uses and Zoning Districts

- Consolidate zoning districts and adopt more performance-related standards consistent with the Comprehensive Plan goals. The current ordinance is confusing and difficult to administer. Zones should regulate particular impacts a use may have on adjacent property, and should serve to implement a particular character desired of the zoning district.
- The Central Business District (CBD) should be a distinct, unique district, both in allowed uses and in design elements, which offers opportunities unlike any other zoning district in the City. Create new CBD standards with an eye towards what can give downtown Fort Smith a unique, competitive edge over other areas. The current C-6 zone should be reviewed in light of the downtown district plan with this concept in mind.
- Revise purpose section of the zoning ordinance to relate to state statutory authority, but also tie more directly to goals established in the Comprehensive Plan. Review the "Characteristics" statements in each zoning district with regard to how each district contributes to the goals of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Establish mixed-use zoning districts

that allow mixes of uses by right, according to specific standards, while attaining goals in the Comprehensive Plan or more specific area plans. The annexation of Fort Chaffee and its use of Planned Unit Development is a good example of this.

Currently, the Building Groups zoning district allows a mix of uses and allows waivers to requirements, but does not set any performance standards or goals to guide developers on developing a plan, or to assist the Planning Commission and Board in exercising their discretion to allow the waivers. This district also requires cumulative parking. This takes away one of the major design benefits and development incentives to mixed uses that enable the design of more efficient and combined parking.

- Add procedures to establish new historic districts, or add to existing districts, and consider adding procedures for designating landmarks (structures, facades) for historic protection. Currently there is no mechanism for evaluating and establishing protections for elements



Chaffee Crossing multi-unit design



Zoning and Subdivision Regulation Guidelines

A) Land Uses and Zoning Districts, continued

- that gain historic significance, whether areas of land or structures. A historic district establishes and limits allowed uses. This could limit the district's application in the future. As an alternative or as a second option, historic protection may work better as a zoning overlay, preserving those elements, whether structural, uses, or design elements, that have historic value in any existing district.
- Establish a hierarchy of park, open space, and green space requirements and design standards. Currently there are no standards for private or public parks, open space, or green space, and the land development regulations are not tied to the Parks Master Plan.
- Revise the non-conforming use section of the zoning ordinance. A use that is illegal at its inception should never attain legal status, regardless of when the City discovers the non-conformance. Abandonment should occur because of any cessation of use, not just due to a "felony." Consider eliminating the provision allowing non-conforming uses to be rebuilt by Conditional Use Permit (CUP). However, uses legally established before any future changes in the zoning regulations should be allowed to continue.
- Annexed lands should default to the lowest possible intensity zone in the absence of a specific development plan approved by the City.

B) Blocks and Street Design

- Update Master Street Plan to parallel Comprehensive Plan goals. Establish a transitional street network where the design of a single street may transition along its route to adjust to adjacent land uses and changing function, rather than a pure hierarchy of streets. Transitional street networks do a better job of: (1) creating connections for pedestrians as well as vehicles; (2) accommodating multiple users of the streets; (3) supporting adjacent land uses rather than dictating land uses; and directing traffic to activity nodes. On the other hand, purely hierarchical street networks have a tendency to: (a) be disconnected creating more automobile trips; (b) overload higher order streets with the most traffic; and (c) pre-determine land uses with strips of commercial development on high-order, high-traffic streets.
- Add specific standards for street,

B) Blocks and Street Design

block, and lot layout to conform to the Comprehensive Plan or street plan. Residential blocks limited to 660 feet and commercial blocks limited to 300 to 450 feet in length are more consistent with pedestrian-oriented Villages and Centers called for in the Comprehensive Plan. Currently there is a 1000-foot block length, which inhibits pedestrian connections. Blocks of these lengths should be the exception due to unusual physical conditions.

- Make clear standards for street connections through either a grid layout or connectivity ratios. While streets may meander, they need to connect. Local streets should only discourage non-local traffic but should connect to other streets to the greatest extent possible. Establish standards for, or encourage, "traffic calming" methods that could achieve the same purpose of discouraging through traffic while maintaining the important connections.
- Reduce the maximum length of cul-de-sacs or only allow these types of streets as exceptions due to unusual physical conditions or odd parcel configurations.
- Require pedestrian easements on all blocks - particularly the shorter blocks and establish clear standards for sidewalks (preferably at least 5 feet in width on both sides of the street.) Currently pedestrian easements are not required on blocks shorter than 600 feet. These shorter blocks are generally more pedestrian friendly and should be required to have pedestrian easements. Clearly, existing neighborhoods and development should enable

variations in character, but all neighborhoods should address pedestrian and bicycle movements.

Applicable to lands in Extra-Territorial Jurisdictional Areas (ETJ)

- Revise subdivision limits to include land areas of larger than 5 acres. Lots of 5 to 20 acres, if allowed without any review with regard to streets, utilities or how they can integrate with adjacent or future development can disrupt future orderly growth by fragmenting ownership patterns, street networks, and utility systems.
- Increase minimum lot sizes (currently 1 acre) in Open Area zone to avoid establishing a development pattern that is difficult to change, rather than "holding" the area for future planning and development. Agriculture and larger (10 to 20-acre lots) are more typical of "holding areas." If this zone is not intended as a "holding area," a more intense residential development pattern may be appropriate to adequately provide the infrastructure needed for future growth.
- Require subdivisions outside City limits and within the planning jurisdiction to meet City standards for streets, block, and lot layouts. In areas where the City is exercising jurisdiction and planning for growth and potential annexation, City standards as opposed to County standards may be more appropriate - particularly if it is an urbanizing area. Dual standards for rural and urban subdivisions may be one option if the character of the area is planned to remain rural in density and character.

C) Site Design Standards

- Expand parking reduction opportunities through more specific shared parking standards and parking credits for alternative transportation access.
- Create commercial district site design standards that encourage or require pedestrian-oriented designs of "Centers or Villages" called for in the Land Use Framework. Currently, large front and side setbacks, low maximum lot coverage will lead to isolated individual sites. Zero setbacks or "build to" lines, large lot coverage percentages are necessary for Centers or Villages in a compact, pedestrian-oriented format. These adjustments allow for design enhancements such as improved and unified streetscapes, public open spaces, reduced and shared parking standards, and mixed office and/or residential uses to contribute to these environments.
- Create design standards for more compact residential districts, whether providing single-family or mixed housing types. A "traditional neighborhood development" ordinance is one technique that can accomplish this. Currently higher-density single family districts have no assurances that the benefits of more compact living arrangements - such as enhanced with pedestrian connections to local commercial, increased public space, schools, or convenient transit service - are achieved.
- Establish commercial corridor standards that address signs, landscaping, and lighting and entry features to address visual confusion, safety, and the visual appeal of the City's major thoroughfares. Create different standards based on street purposes, functions, access and land uses in accordance with the transportation section of the plan, and the development of Corridor Plans. Revisions to commercial zones specifically related to sign standards including billboards, temporary and portable, should be addressed.
- Promote "green" building and site design techniques through optional methods of zoning which would enable the creative designer to increase density, reduce parking and setbacks, modify building code requirements to meet LEED standards (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design).

4.2 TRANSPORTATION - THE CIRCULATION SYSTEM

Goal 1: Achieve a coordinated transportation and land use

Approach: Develop a transportation plan that reserves land in future corridors, prioritizes available funds, functions consistently with the land use plan, and capitalizes on assets such as the public transportation system, river, and highway network. Emphasis should be on connectivity, flexibility (choice of transportation modes), and aesthetic and environmental impacts.

Goal 2: Improve the function and aesthetics of commercial corridors.

Approach: Implement plans for long-term improvement of commercial corridors addressing both the function and aesthetics of prime commercial corridors.

OVERVIEW

One of the central elements of the Comprehensive Plan is the City's circulation system. The circulation system includes all modes of moving people and goods. This section also addresses policies related to the road network as the first step in revising the Master Street Plan so that it is fully integrated with other city development. It establishes city policy, and brings together all the transportation elements that make the City function and create the daily experience of people going about their business. It establishes the policies and actions needed to ensure that the right of the public to travel freely and safely is maintained.

The plan focuses on corridors and street functions. Corridors are important for a number of reasons. They provide residents and visitors with their major impressions of the City. The economic health of commercial corridors is critical to the city, both visually and functionally. As new development moves down the

road, older establishments lose their market and fall into disrepair, and eventually become unmarketable and vacant. This can be seen along Towson Avenue, Midland Boulevard and even portions of Rogers Avenue. People remember when Towson and Midland were "the" places to go; now it is Rogers Avenue southeast of I-540. Such vacant and under-used areas become opportunities for revitalization.

Significant investments have been made to revitalize the heart of the city through road improvements, the new library, convention center and the riverfront. It is essential that these investments be protected and that other land use and development decisions reinforce this core city objective of fostering redevelopment. Commercial corridor improvements and the development and adoption of Corridor Plans are significant elements in maintaining the economic, transportation and visual vitality of the city (refer to 4.1 for more on Corridor Plans).

Section 4 - Plan Framework

Street functions are also important to understand. Determining how well each street is serving its stated purpose and making sure that each street has a designated function will be the emphasis of the Master Street Plan. Revising the Master Street Plan is beyond the scope of the Comprehensive Plan. However, the Plan addresses the changes that need to be made to that plan in order to implement the City of Neighborhoods. By looking at the design of each facility together with the land uses it serves, the Plan establishes guidelines for making sure the City gets the most out of each facility.

While all streets are designed to carry vehicle traffic, they are not all the same, nor designed for the same purpose. Some are designed to move people and goods at high speeds through an area (I-40 and I-540) while others are designed to provide access to your house. Sometimes, the traffic function of a street does not match the needs of adjacent properties. Striking a balance between regional circulation and local access is a primary objective of the transportation plan.

Critical Recommended Actions Include:

- Revise and adopt Master Street Plan and street classifications based on the policies and guidance in the City of Neighborhoods Plan including the land area described as Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ).
- Establish a set of access management principles to be incorporated into the Master Street Plan, Subdivision Regulations, and Zoning Ordinance.
- Re-route through truck traffic in CBID and concentrate industry at high access locations.
- Establish corridor-specific plans and develop strong public/private partnerships for improvements.
- Enhance entryways into the City, including highway interchanges, the airport, and river crossings with way finding and city signature signage and landscaping.
- Adopt site design standards for landscaping, lighting, setback, signage, and floor area ratio for land along the most visible corridors in the City. Consider using a hierarchy of corridor design standards.

4.2.1 The Street Network

The street network is the primary transportation investment in the city, therefore this element of the plan has several subsections. These six subsections include policies, corridor planning, access management guidelines, guidelines for future street extensions, master street plan recommended revisions and street reclassification guidelines.

Policies

G1.1 Policy: Land development should be compatible with the design, function and capacity of the roadway and not place burdens on it that render it unsafe or seriously degrade its function; conversely, road design should not negatively impact its planned use.

Recommended Actions and Considerations

- a. Prepare Corridor Plans for City arterials and those in transition to ensure that both land use and transportation goals are being met. Minimum elements for inclusion are access management, transit, bicycle and pedestrian modes, drainage, lighting, land uses and zoning. (1)
- b. Review all major infrastructure investments for area impacts and consistency with adjacent land uses. (2)
- c. Focus property access into identifiable intersections. (3)
- d. Create pedestrian crossings at locations convenient to the pedestrian and where traffic controls and landscaping improve crossing conditions. (4)
- e. Protect residential land uses along City roadways including arterials. (5)
- f. Limit the use of 5-lane arterials (4 travel lanes plus a continuous two-way left-turn lane) and instead concentrate turn movements at key intersections and at select median openings. (6)
- g. Extend the Street Sales Tax to include full facility design for all modes of transportation (transit stops and shelters, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities in conjunction with road repair and redesign).(7)
- h. Ensure that new and expanded streets are serving the function for which they have been designed for small enterprises within specific zones. (8)

G1.2 Policy: Make major destinations highly accessible by all modes of transportation.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Create efficient alternative transportation links between entryways to the City, such as the airport, convention and business centers. Consider both public and private services. (9)
- b. Promote employment and retail development along routes that are served well by all modes, particularly transit routes. (10)
- c. See that major destinations have good sidewalks and pedestrian access. (11)

G1.3 Policy: Minimize growth in vehicle miles traveled as the City grows through a variety of locational and programmatic measures.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Locate essential services such as retail and medical facilities as close as possible to major residential areas. (12)
- b. Provide access between adjoining properties so that drivers need not exit to the street to move between them and so that pedestrians could walk conveniently. (13)
- c. Encourage development of infill properties and redevelopment of underutilized properties close to employment and shopping areas. (14)

Section 4 - Plan Framework

G1.4 Policy: Address improvements to the existing street network by first optimizing access and circulation through better design and utilization of existing right-of-way, in cooperation with property owners.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Identify locations in commercial corridors experiencing congestion, accidents and confusion over driveway access. (15)b. Implement access management for both existing and new facilities. (16)c. Improve traffic operations through signal coordination and intersection | <ul style="list-style-type: none">reconfiguration, where appropriate. (17)d. Decide where new capacity is needed within existing corridors (where efficiency is gained through access management, appropriate land use and other operational improvements still do not address the inadequacy of a street). (18) |
|--|---|

CORRIDOR PLANNING

Main Commercial Arterials Appropriate for Corridor Plans:

- Midland Boulevard
- Zero Street
- Rogers Avenue
- East Phoenix Avenue
- Towson Avenue
- Wheeler Avenue
- Grand Avenue
- 10th & 11th downtown pair

Corridors in Transition Appropriate for Corridor Plans:

- Jenny Lind Road
- Greenwood Avenue
- Old Greenwood Road
- Phoenix Avenue
- Kelley Highway
- Massard Road

Existing Community Gateways Appropriate for Improved Gateway and/or Directional Signage:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I-540 south at U.S. 271• I-540 north to/from Fayetteville and the east-west I-40 corridor• I-540 Interchanges<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Kelly Highway-Grand Avenue-Rogers Avenue -State Highway 22-Old Greenwood Road/Phoenix Avenue | <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Zero Street of State 255-U.S. 71• U.S. 64 northwest to/from I-40 in Oklahoma across the Arkansas River into Downtown• U.S. 71/64 - Midland Boulevard Bridge - into/from Van Buren |
|---|---|

Future Community Gateways - I-49 Interchanges:

- U.S. 71 south of Fort Chaffee

ACCESS MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Access management is the practice that provides access to property while maintaining the flow of traffic on the surrounding road system safely and efficiently. Access management can be implemented through a combination of land use ordinances and driveway regulations.

According to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, access management is critical to reducing accident rates and providing for smooth traffic operations. Commercial property owners want convenient, frequent access to their businesses. Access management finds a balance between the needs of adjacent property owners and the needs of through traffic. The basic principles include:

1) LIMIT THE NUMBER OF CONFLICT POINTS

A conflict point occurs where vehicle paths cross, merge into or diverge from one another. Conflict points are good indicators of the potential for accidents: the more conflict points that occur at an intersection or driveway, the higher the potential for vehicular crashes. For example, a typical 4-leg intersection has 32 conflict points; however, when left-turns and cross-street through movements are restricted, the number of conflict points drops to four. Thus, the potential for crashes is significantly reduced.

- A. Restrict the use of two-way left turn lanes on arterial streets. Continuous center turn lanes are provided to ensure high land accessibility. However, this can lead to a profusion of driveways too closely spaced creating high frequency of conflict points. Head-on collisions are a concern, as drivers jockey to turn and others use the center lane to accelerate to travel speed. While providing access, the function as a through way for travelers is greatly diminished, and driver confusion and stress can cause shoppers to avoid these areas. The access benefits of two-way left-turn lanes diminish on streets carrying more than 20,000 daily vehicles.
- B. Care should be taken to not overpopulate cross streets with driveways as well, since cross streets may carry significant pedestrian traffic. Consolidation of driveways between property owners is the best way to reduce the impact of driveways on both vehicular and pedestrian traffic

ACCESS MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

2) SEPARATE BASIC CONFLICT AREAS

Intersections of public streets, as well as intersections of driveways and public streets, represent basic conflict areas. High levels of turning can occur at these locations and consequently through traffic needs time to react to the deceleration, acceleration and travel paths of other vehicles at or near the intersections. Adequate spacing between intersections allows drivers to react to one intersection at a time and provides greater opportunities to avoid potential conflicts at each successive downstream intersection.

- A. Provide Cross-Street Access- Whenever possible, cross-streets (collectors) should provide access to property in commercial areas. Cross-streets, properly spaced along arterials, connect to local streets and allow access to commercial, industrial and residential property. These cross-streets would typically be an extension of the City's street grid.
- B. Property access points should be restricted along the arterial. Some cities allow no direct access to the arterial when cross-street access is possible. Others allow arterial driveways in the range of one per 100 feet of arterial frontage to one per 500 feet depending on traffic speeds, sight distance and other factors.
- C. Consolidate existing driveways where possible. Driveway consolidation represents another approach for reducing the number of conflict points along an arterial. The number of driveways opening directly to an arterial or major collector street should be minimized to prevent traffic disruptions and to improve safety. Adjacent properties should share driveways whenever possible through easement agreements. Some cities have established control criteria that provides for only two access points per side per mile for principal arterials; for minor arterials, 4 per side per mile are allowed. Collector criteria raise the number to six per side per mile.
 - Driveway permits should be required for any driveway.
 - Provision of more than one driveway would be granted only if analysis shows that traffic operations would not suffer, that minimum corner clearance and sight distance are achieved and that no other reasonable access alternative exists.
 - All driveways should conform to minimum and maximum width requirements, appropriate to the land use.
 - Undefined, open access along a property's frontage should be disallowed.
 - Most minor arterial state highways also feature intersections with cross streets. Even with minimum spacing of 600 feet between intersections, and four driveways per mile per side, traffic would be interrupted 12 times per side per mile.
 - Parcels with multiple driveways should be reviewed for potential consolidation of driveways as uses change.

ACCESS MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

3) REDUCE INTERFACE WITH THROUGH TRAFFIC

Traffic often needs to slow for vehicles exiting, entering, or turning across the roadway. Providing turn lanes and restricting turning movements, allows turning traffic to get out of the way of following through traffic.

- A. A variety of options are available to retro-fit 5-lane streets that now use a two-way left-turn lane including adding landscaped medians and providing left-turn bays at intersections. On low speed streets in built up areas where through traffic is not a major concern, on-street parking might be provided.
- B. Corner clearance requirements must be observed to maintain safe and efficient traffic flow on the cross-streets. While it may be desirable to create relatively narrow cross-streets to control driver speed, sufficient turning radii and maneuvering room at intersections should be provided. This allows trucks and buses to make turns without impeding traffic flow along the major street.
- C. Allow or require frontage roads on arterials where limited access is needed.
 - On deeply setback properties where commercial development has direct access, a frontage road should be considered as a form of access management. Frontage roads can be built in stages to retrofit existing access and to provide new access to developing parcels. Additional right-of-way may need to be acquired by either dedication or condemnation.
 - Reverse frontage systems could also be considered in areas where a more urban form is appropriate. Buildings would be situated closer to the arterial street with access being provided from the "back" side.
 - Frontage roads are most frequently used in Texas. Interstate highways are lined with commercial activities, with primary access provided to one-way frontage roads. Freeway access points include crossover (U-turn) opportunities for drivers. These frontage roads free up highway capacity for through traffic while consolidating local access traffic to specific access points along the highway. While a good technical solution, this is not the most attractive solution.

“One key to meeting this goal is the practice of access management, the balance between property access and the movement of through traffic.”

ACCESS MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

4) PROVIDE FOR ADEQUATE ON-SITE CIRCULATION AND STORAGE

The design of good internal vehicle circulation in parking areas and on local streets reduces the number of driveways that businesses need for access to the major roadway.

- A. Large commercial properties with out-parcels should be treated similar to planned unit developments that provide a master plan for site development showing an ultimate access plan. Out-parcels should share access through the site's "internal" road system as it connects to a cross street. It is important to recognize that while parcels have a right of access to the street system, they do not necessarily have a right to a specific driveway or to direct arterial access if other access is reasonably available. In the case of state highways and roadways, specific permits must be obtained to allow access directly onto the road.*

The Urban Land Institute Recommends:

1. Decide the purpose of the road; is it a "seam", knitting the area together, or an edge, with higher speeds carrying primarily through traffic? Streets carrying more than 20,000 vehicles per day typically form an edge.
2. Provide for a supporting roadway system for parallel movement.
3. Consolidate driveways and connect parcels internally. Reducing the number of access points can result in about a 30% reduction in the accident rate along a commercial corridor.
4. Resist the urge to over-commercialize the area. Mix in other uses, such as medium density residential, public services (libraries, museums, school, city and county offices) and parks to break the monotony of development patterns. Those types of uses typically have different peaks than retail, reducing the turning conflicts along the arterial.
5. Plan for shared parking. Smaller, grouped parking lots convenient to several commercial buildings allow shoppers to walk between destinations. This is the same principle applied in shopping malls.

“ In "Ten Principles for Reinventing America's Suburban Strips", The Urban Land Institute recommends several key planning principles when considering mobility and access along principal and minor arterials serving commercial sites ”

* The City of Palo Alto, California, is a good example of this type of development pattern. Along University Avenue, historic single-family homes and multi-family units intermix with small retail establishments, professional offices and city functions mid-block, while larger retail developments occupy signalized intersections. On-street angle parking reduces traffic speeds; short blocks allow access to the parallel street system. Although University Street provides direct access from U.S. 101 to Stanford University, traffic flows fairly well along the corridor.

GUIDELINES FOR FUTURE STREET EXTENSIONS INTO NEW LANDS

Classifications

Future street extensions should be classified with an eye towards the anticipated land uses they will serve and the volume of traffic they are likely to carry. While ultimate land use cannot always be known when a street is built, in many cases it is fairly well known. Residential developments, for example, tend to be stable, long-term uses for which streets can be carefully tailored. Likewise, development capacity of commercial areas can be reasonably estimated along with their traffic requirements. Given the variety of residential and commercial development occurring, a wider variety of street classifications would be appropriate than the three current classifications. Arterial streets can have sub-classifications recognizing the function of the arterial and its traffic speed. These could be:

Principal Arterial - functioning mainly as a highway for longer distance travel in the metropolitan region, these arterials feature higher speeds in less developed areas and connections with interstate highways. Within built-up areas, they provide a through route, connecting to other highways.

Secondary Arterial - primarily connecting with other arterials and serving more densely developed areas. Speeds are lower than on principal arterials as a higher degree of access is provided to adjacent

property. Similarly, collector streets can have variations to suit the character and needs of particular neighborhoods. For instance, collectors could be two- to four-lane streets depending on the traffic volume and density of surrounding development. They can have on-street parking if traffic volumes and abutting land uses warrant it. Collectors would generally be one to two miles in length, though some can be longer.

Local streets primarily serve residential areas and some commercial uses. They are for local access and are therefore low-speed streets. They frequently have on-street parking on one or both sides. In residential areas, especially, a variety of street widths can be provided depending on the length of the street, the number of homes served, and the amount of traffic likely to use it. Street widths ranging from 22' to 36' feet may be appropriate. Residential streets should convey a residential character by keeping widths to a minimum so that traffic speeds stay low. Traffic calming features should also be allowed to reduce speed and crashes, particularly at intersections where other traffic controls such as stop signs are not justified.

GUIDELINES FOR FUTURE STREET EXTENSIONS INTO NEW LANDS

Spacing Criteria

Arterials: Minimum spacing of 1 mile in developing areas

Collectors: Minimum spacing of 0.5 miles

Local Streets: as needed

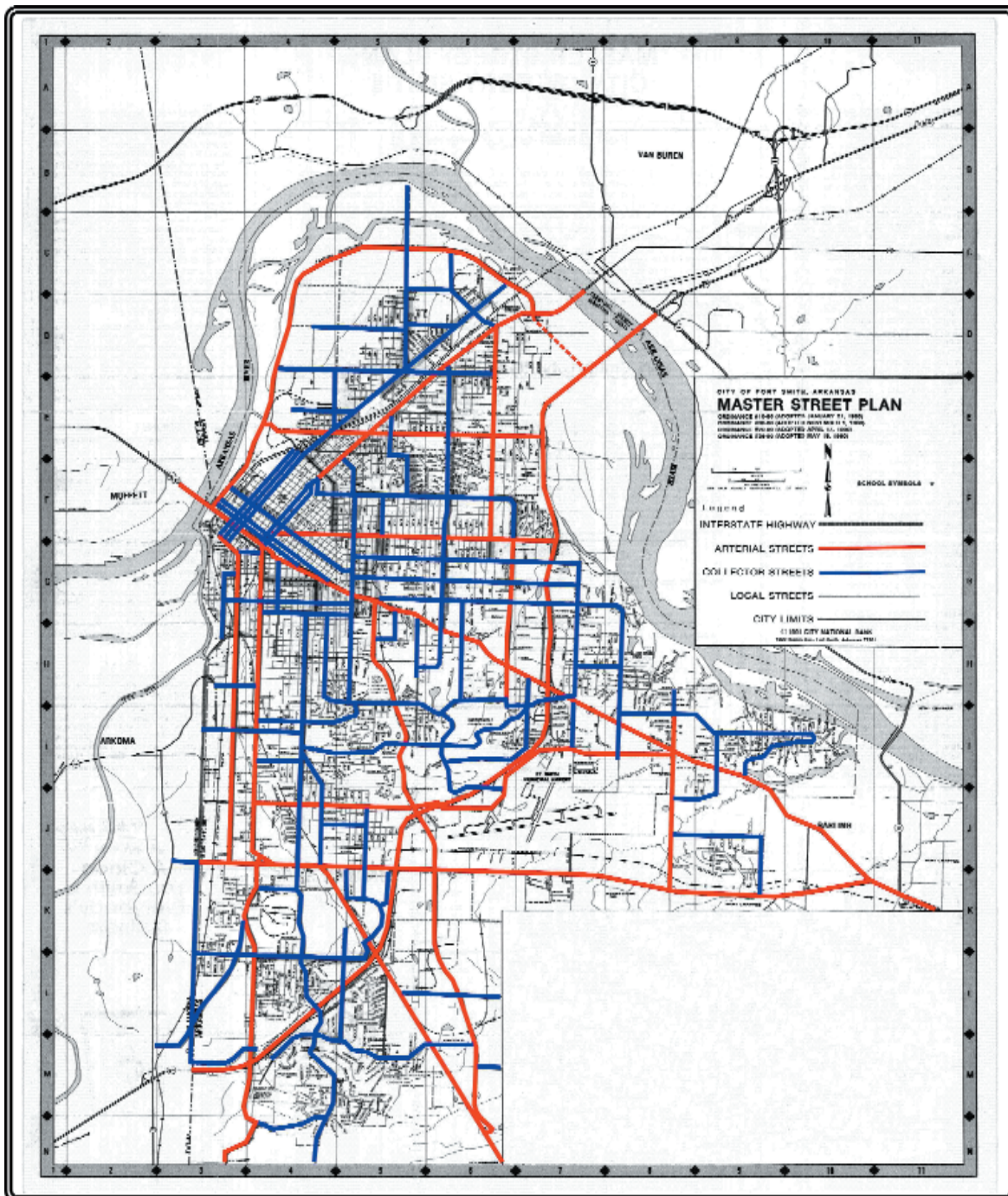
Cross-Sections

Newly constructed and reconstructed streets must generally incorporate bicycle travel in their configuration. The following cross-sections illustrate arterial and collector options with bike facilities. For arterials, the cross-sections recognize lower- and higher-speed roads (less than 45 mph and greater than 45 mph) by adjusting lane widths and class of bicycle lane. Narrower lanes are appropriate for lower speed streets. The suggested arterial cross-sections address new 100' ROW as well as existing 80' ROW streets. For 100' ROW sections, it is assumed that access management plans will be implemented; this allows medians to replace most two-way left-turn lanes. Ft. Smith could in this way create attractive boulevards in commercial and mixed-use corridors, giving these streets a distinguishing character.

Accessibility

Accessibility measures the number of opportunities one has to reach a destination. Clearly, important public services such as key government offices (including the Social Security office, Internal Revenue Service, Post Office, and other customer service offices such as utility payment centers), medical facilities, schools, and libraries, should be located where the public has multiple streets to drive, numerous ways to walk or cycle, and multiple transit routes to ride. In many instances, a downtown or near to downtown location will meet these criteria, since many streets converge there and since it is the only place that all transit routes converge.

Suggested Master Street Plan Classifications



Suggested Master Street Plan Classifications

- Collectors
- Arterials

STREET CLASSIFICATION GUIDELINES

Collectors

The following eleven (11) cross-sections offer flexibility in designing the right-of-way to meet diverse adjacent land use and through traffic needs. The 1990 adopted Master Street Plan offers one Arterial and one Collector standard at 80' and 60' respectively.

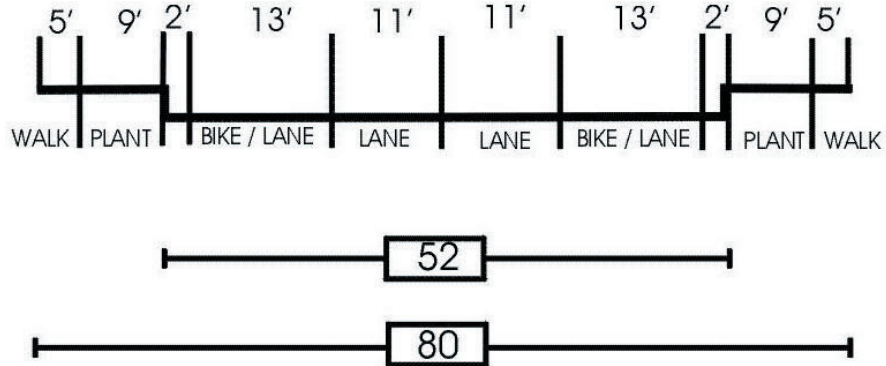
These cross-sections illustrate how landscaping, bicycle, pedestrian, medians, turn movements, drainage, and parking may be combined within existing designated right-of-way.

On-street parking should be recognized in street design, for both local and collector facilities.

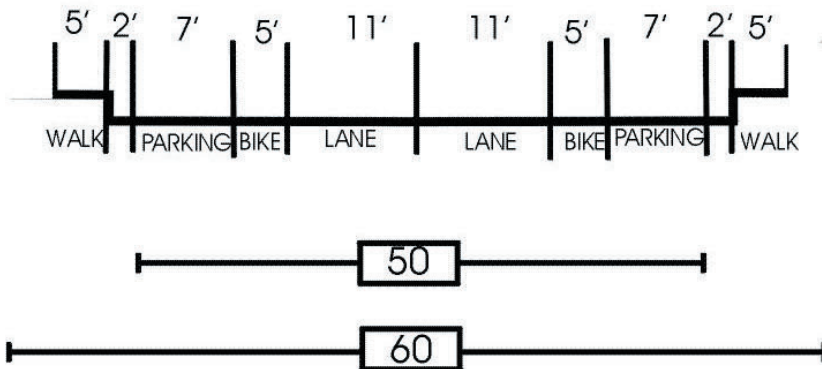
Lower volume facilities, under 5,000ADT, could consider parking on both sides of the street.

The use of 12' lanes are appropriate for interstate travel. In urban settings 11' lanes are appropriate widths for speeds below 45 MPH.

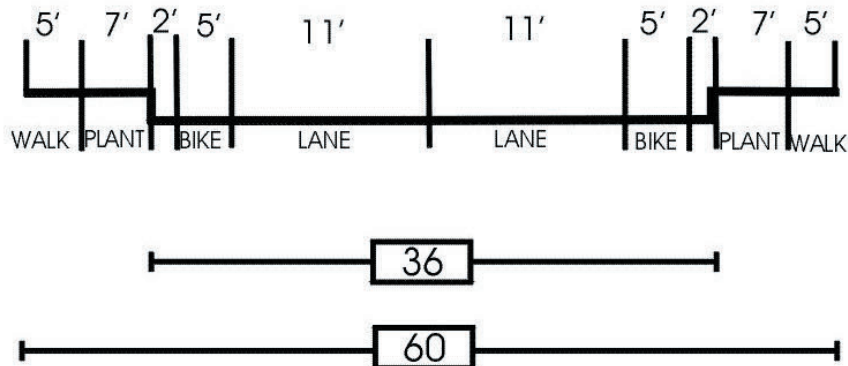
Low Speed Arterial (<45 mph)



Collectors -- With Parking



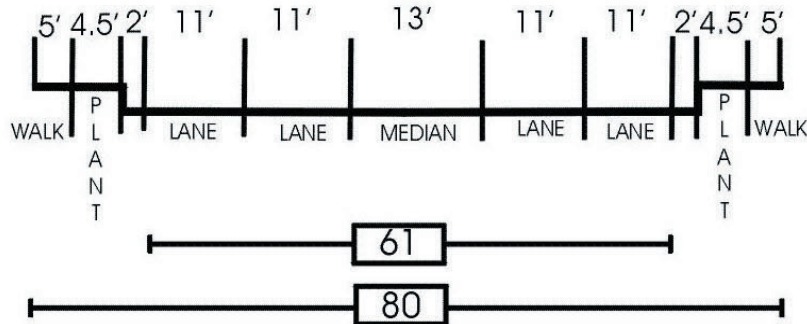
Collectors -- No Parking



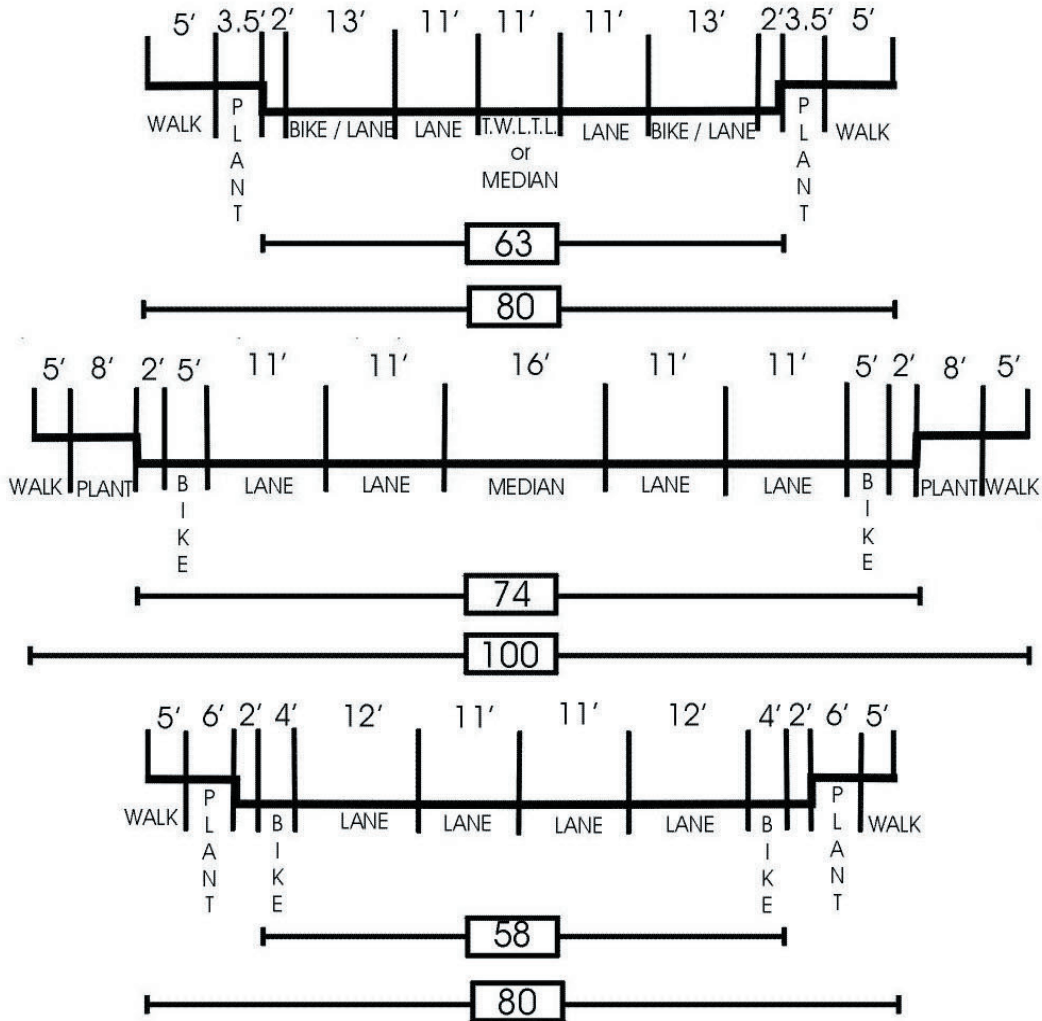
STREET CLASSIFICATION GUIDELINES

Low Speed Arterial

Low Speed Arterial (<45 mph)



Low Speed Arterial (<45 mph) -- With Bike Lane



The use of 11' lanes help reduce cost and leave a minimally acceptable planting strip between curbs and sidewalks.

A 5-lane arterial can offer a Bike route with the shared curb lane.

With the majority of the City developed, it is difficult and costly to widen existing roadways to increase capacity. Using a variety of techniques, streets can function at higher efficiency.

Landscaped medians, consolidated turn movements, and left turn movement designs, can reduce congestion, improve the aesthetics and increase capacity using the existing right-of-way.

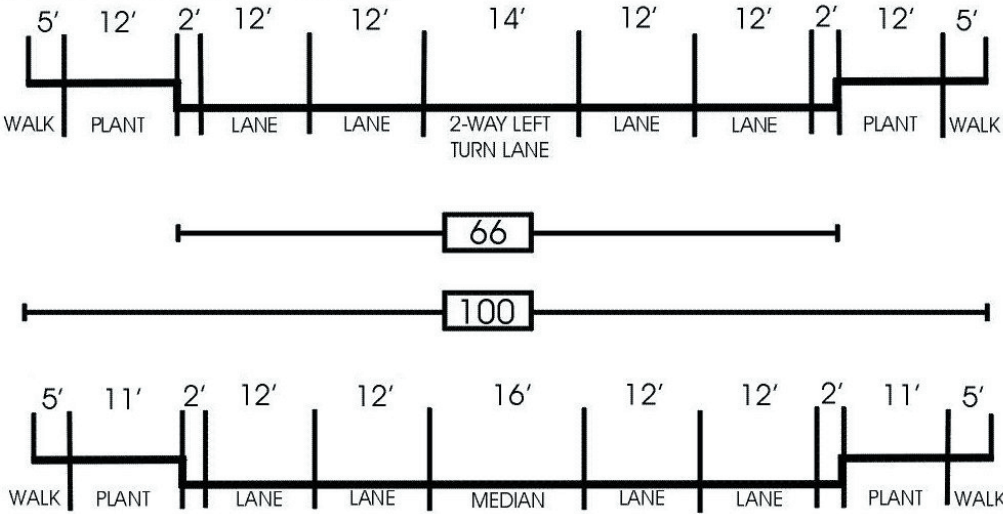
Incorporation of bike lanes, route and paths throughout the street network is important in designing the street classifications and cross-sections.

STREET CLASSIFICATION GUIDELINES

High Speed Arterials

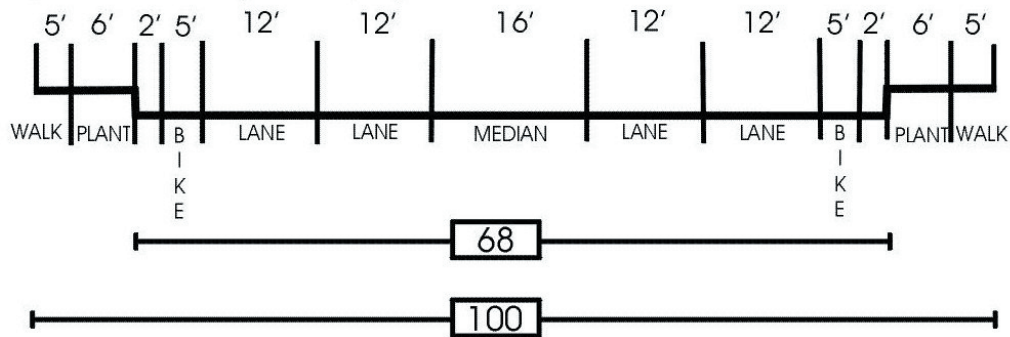
Recent road projects have expanded some Arterial cross-sections to 100' right-of-way. These facilities are designed for higher speeds covering longer distances. Access to these facilities is limited in order to reduce accident rates and maintain facility function.

High Speed Arterial (>45 mph)

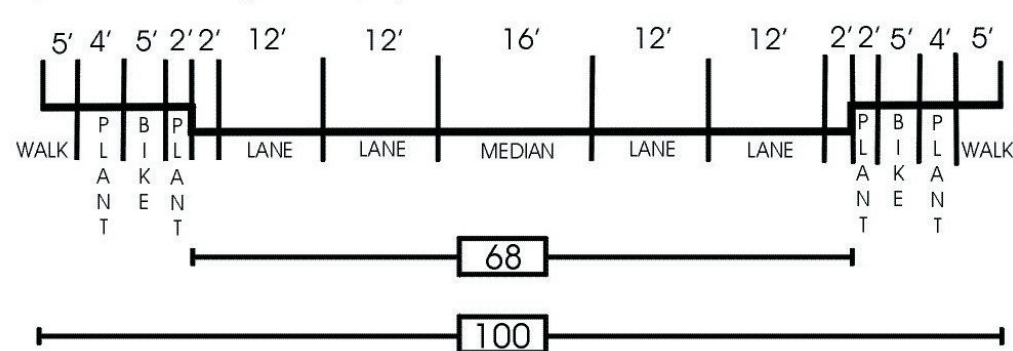


The current CIP and sales tax revenue stream for road and drainage improvements does not include funding for transit, transit stops and shelters, bicycle or pedestrian facilities. These elements should be included for consideration in all future right-of-way reconstructions and design of new facilities. An amendment to allow more comprehensive system design would be needed to fund these projects.

High Speed Arterial (>45 mph) -- With Bike Lane



High Speed Arterial (>45 mph) -- With Bike Path



4.2.2 The Regional Transportation Network

Several major regional and interstate facilities have been under feasibility study for a number of years. The most prominent of which is the proposed north-south I-49 connection between I-40 and Highway 71 south through to Texarkana and Louisiana. In 1991, this corridor was designated by Congress as a National High Priority Corridor, and a priority corridor in the North American Free Trade Agreement. The I-49 Roadbuilder Coalition (made up of Chamber of Commerce organizations and communities along the route) is working to fund and construct the first section of the corridor by 2010. In the disposition of the Fort Chaffee lands, right-of-way has been dedicated to the construction of the majority of the Fort Smith, Barling and Greenwood sections.

A second major regional facility is south I-540 west to I-40, through Oklahoma. This route was studied by ODOT in 1993. There is a strong need for better connections with Oklahoma that this feasibility study addressed. While in 1993 there were many factors that rendered it unfeasible, it is still considered part of the regional transportation plan for consideration.

G1.5 Policy: Promote development of regional highway connections and improvements that will benefit trade and commerce.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- | | |
|---|---|
| a. Continue participation in I-49 Roadbuilder Coalition. (19) | the Wheeler/Towson corridors south of downtown Ft. Smith. (21) |
| b. Work with Arkansas and Oklahoma Departments of Transportation and congressional delegations to pursue completion of I-540 west. (20) | d. Maintain the high function U.S. 71 South as a high speed region serving facility. (22) |
| c. Seek improved truck access to regional highways, especially for | e. Maintain the high function of I-540 as a through-way. (23) |

4.2.3 Neighborhood Streets

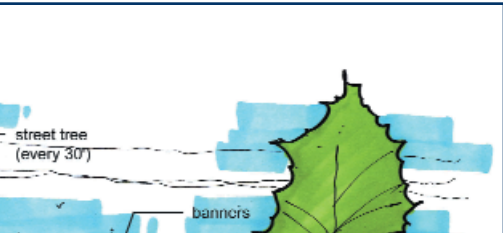
GI.6 Policy: Protect residential neighborhoods from excessive through traffic.

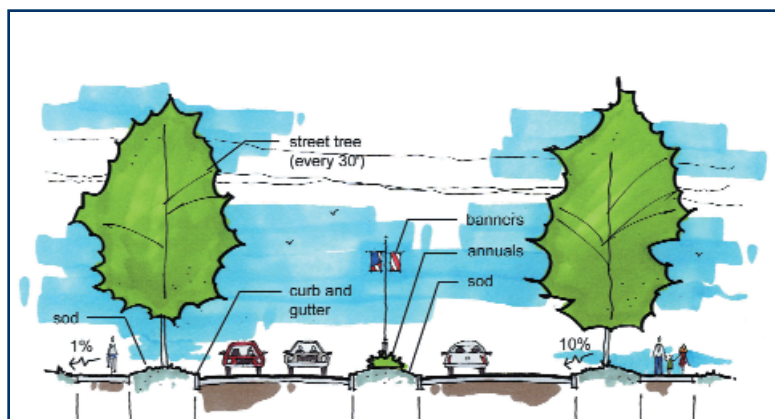
Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Develop neighborhood protection plans as part of Neighborhood Plans or as the stimulus for Neighborhood Plans. (24)
- b. Emphasize the use of landscape and over visual deterrents to slow and keep out traffic. (25)
- c. In new construction, establish street design standards that encourage residential streets to function as such and not as collector streets. Factors that contribute to excessive speed and volume include streets greater than a half mile in length, streets wider than 30' and the lack of other streets that convey traffic to nearby arterials. (26)
- d. Provide for neighborhood traffic calming in subdivision regulations, neighborhood plans, and the Master Street Plan. (27)

GI.7 Policy: Enhance pedestrian, bicycle, transit, service vehicle and emergency circulation.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Provide for different types of residential and local streets that impart differences in neighborhood character. (28)
 - b. Promote the incorporation of detached sidewalks with continuous tree-plantings. (29)
- 
- The diagram shows a green, leafy tree with a brown trunk. To the left of the tree, there is a dashed line representing a sidewalk. Below the sidewalk, there is a label 'street tree (every 30\')'. To the right of the tree, there is a blue rectangular area representing a banner. Below the banner, there is a label 'banners'.
- c. Repair and maintain existing alley system for trash removal, property access and vehicle storage. Consider requiring the continuation of the alley system in new subdivisions (also addressed in Neighborhood Section 4.4). (30)
 - d. Limit cul-de-sac development to facilitate efficient circulation (also addressed in 4.4). (31)
 - e. Prioritize school areas and parks for pedestrian, bicycle and transit access and design within a $\frac{1}{4}$ mile radius. (32)



Chaffee Crossing proposed boulevard system

4.2.4 Parking

Providing for vehicle parking is as important a part of the transportation system as roads. Storing, loading, unloading, picking-up, dropping-off, getting-in and out are all part of how we reach our homes and businesses. While parking is an essential part of the circulation system, it is regulated not by the Master Street Plan but by the zoning ordinance, demonstrating yet again the important relationship between land use policy and transportation performance.

Parking standards, or the number and dimensions of spaces required for each use, have been established for each zoning category. These have been the subject of many debates over the years.

G1.8 Policy: Ensure that sufficient, well designed and convenient on street and off-street parking is provided to serve land uses.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Establish both maximum and minimum standards in key zoning categories to ensure the highest and best use of the land. (33)
- b. Promote shared parking opportunities between uses by allowing reductions for mixed-use development and those uses that do not conflict in hours of operation. (34)
- c. Consider revising retail parking requirements based on local experience and national research concerning demand patterns. (35)
- d. Establish clear neighborhood parking standards that mark areas where on-street parking is allowed and where it is prohibited due to safety. (36)
- e. Establish residential parking standards that define areas where vehicle storage is permitted, more clearly define carport and garage location criteria, and establish the number of vehicles allowed by lot size and housing square footage. (37)
- f. Allow on-street parking on commercial streets where building set-backs from the street are limited, slower moving traffic is desired, and where the commercial properties would benefit from the ability to provide both parking and a landscaped pedestrian area for their patrons. Areas such as north Greenwood Avenue and sections of Rogers Avenue, north of Greenwood Avenue, are good examples where this might apply. (38)
- g. Pursue creative public/private funding options for construction and maintenance of shared facilities in the downtown and riverfront locations. (39)



4.2.5 Pedestrian Circulation

The popularity of walking for exercise and enjoyment has been on the rise in Fort Smith. The park system has become increasingly filled with 'walkers'. Furthermore, all trips by any mode begin and end with a walk. Pedestrian environments need to be reasonably attractive, impart a feeling of safety and separation from moving vehicles, and be designed for use by all individuals including those with impaired physical mobility. This last element is becoming increasingly important as our population grows older.



When walking is not perceived as safe, convenient, or comfortable, it is not selected as a mode of travel or as an enjoyable means of exercise and recreation. Sidewalks are particularly important in areas where children under the age of 16 are present and where older adults reside. With 10% of Fort Smith households not having access to a car, and a high percentage of the city population not yet able to drive, the need for good, safe and enjoyable walking and bicycle space is imperative.

G1.9 Policy: Provide attractive, safe and continuous detached sidewalks wherever possible.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Work with neighborhoods to establish sidewalk priority areas using measurable criteria such as proximity to schools, jobs, shopping, parks, and other community facilities. (40)
- b. In certain commercial zones, require new development to provide sidewalks and other pedestrian amenities within their site design. (41)
- c. Pursue a variety of funding options for the continued replacement and repair of sidewalks that have deteriorated due to age and tree root invasion. (42)
- d. Require new or renovated pedestrian paths in priority areas to be of sufficient width to accommodate the physically disabled in both directions (minimum 5' width). (43)
- e. Enforce and restrict speed limits in residential neighborhood, Downtown and in other areas where pedestrian activities are encouraged such as regional, community, institutional and neighborhood centers. A limit of 25 mph is optimal for safety and circulation. (44)



G1.10 Policy: Improve traffic flow and integrate safe pedestrian and bicycle travel into the transportation network, particularly at key intersections of high commercial and employment activity.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Implement a pedestrian and bicycle plan for transportation purposes, as well as recreation purposes, linking neighborhoods to important destinations such as employment centers, parks, downtown, and schools. (45)
- b. Revise subdivision street standards to require multiple connections and distribution of traffic to area streets rather than concentrating traffic on a few streets. (46)
- c. Enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety by integrating these modes into road design and subdivision standards, as an integral part of the transportation network. (47)
- d. Re-route truck traffic around downtown to improve pedestrian conditions. (48)
- e. Explore a road impact fee for developments and business expansions that may generate the need for unplanned system improvements. (49)
- f. Establish primary pedestrian and bicycle corridors and crossings, avoiding high volume arterials. (50)
- g. Establish a program to consolidate curb cuts and minimize those allowed, improving traffic flow and enabling other modes to more easily use the system. This is particularly important on commercial arterials through town. (51)



*“I would like to
see the old
railroad tracks
converted to
bike trails.”*

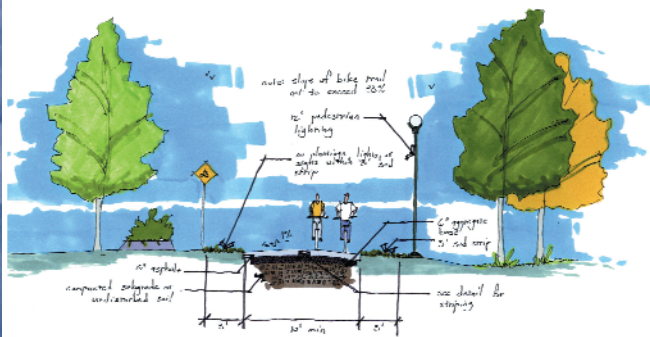
4.2.6 The Bicycle Plan

Providing for bicycle travel is an integral part of the overall transportation plan for the City. As both a recreational activity and a means of transportation, this element along with the pedestrian element are addressed in the neighborhood and parks and recreation sections of the Comprehensive Plan as well. As with other elements of the plan, It can be implemented through the Master Street Plan, Subdivision Regulations, and Area and Corridor Plans, the Zoning Ordinance, and Capital Improvements Program (the CIP).

G1.11 Policy: Provide for the public's interest, safety and general welfare by encouraging and offering a well planned, safe and efficient bikeway system that will interconnect neighborhoods and provide access to both neighborhood and city-wide destinations.

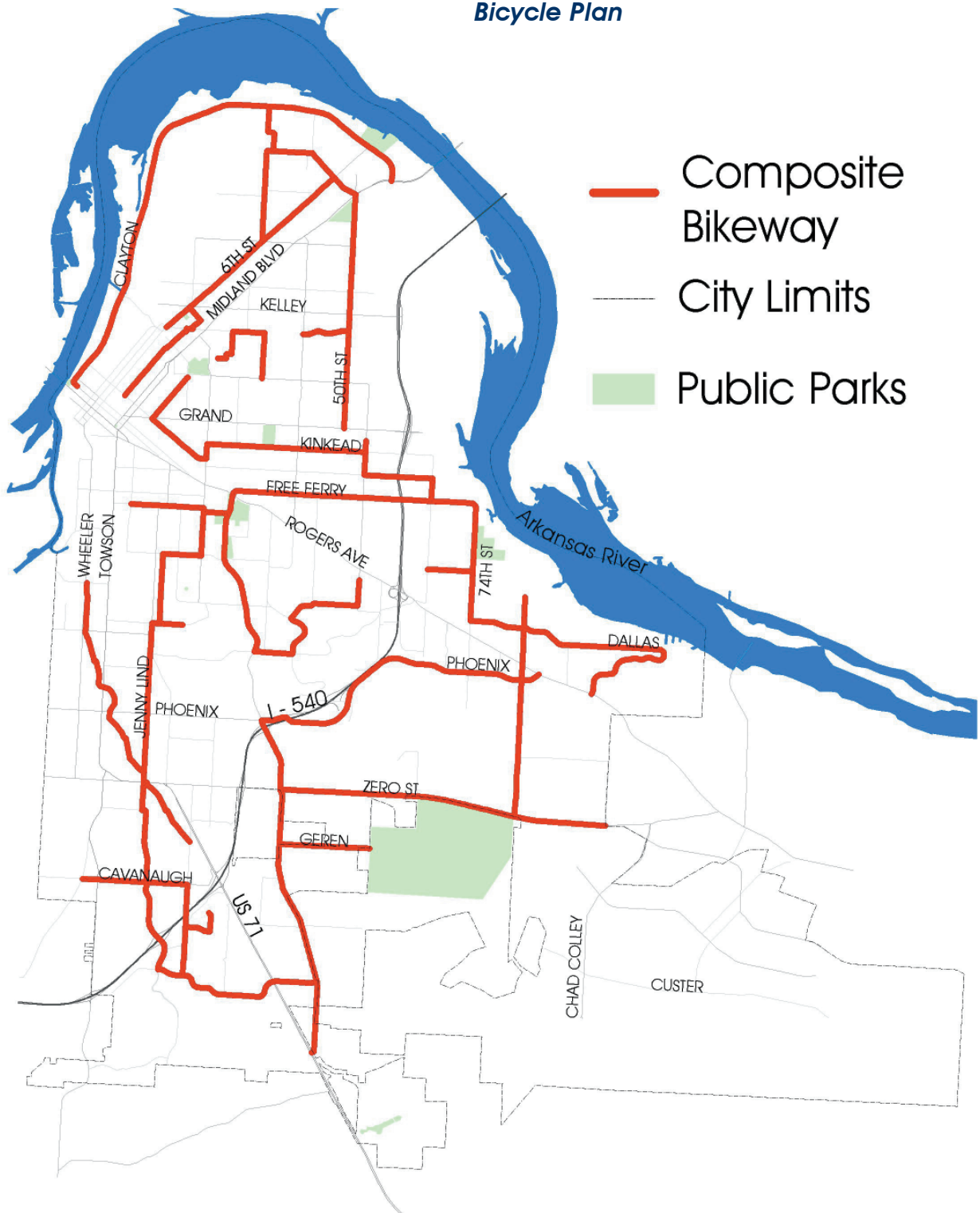
Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Incorporate and require bicycle accommodation, design and construction considerations in all street reconstruction and new construction projects. Develop design and construction specification for bikeways that are safe and compatible with the City's streets based on street function, vehicle traffic volume and speed. Promote the safety of the bicyclist and motorist alike by initiating a broad based bicycle educational program in the Fort Smith Public School system and the parochial and private schools in the City. (52)
- b. Address individual neighborhood needs for access to schools, parks, commercial centers and churches. (53)
- c. Connect the City's neighborhoods and provide access to employment centers, the downtown, the University of Arkansas, Fort Smith, and other service and entertainment destinations. (54)
- d. Work with Ft. Smith Transit Department to accommodate bikes on buses. (55)
- e. Provide public bicycle lock-up and storage facilities within all public projects, including transit stops, and require large private commercial developments and major employers to provide parking and storage facilities on site. (56)

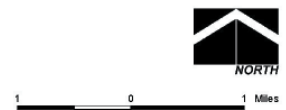


Chaffee Crossing Bike Trail

Bicycle Plan

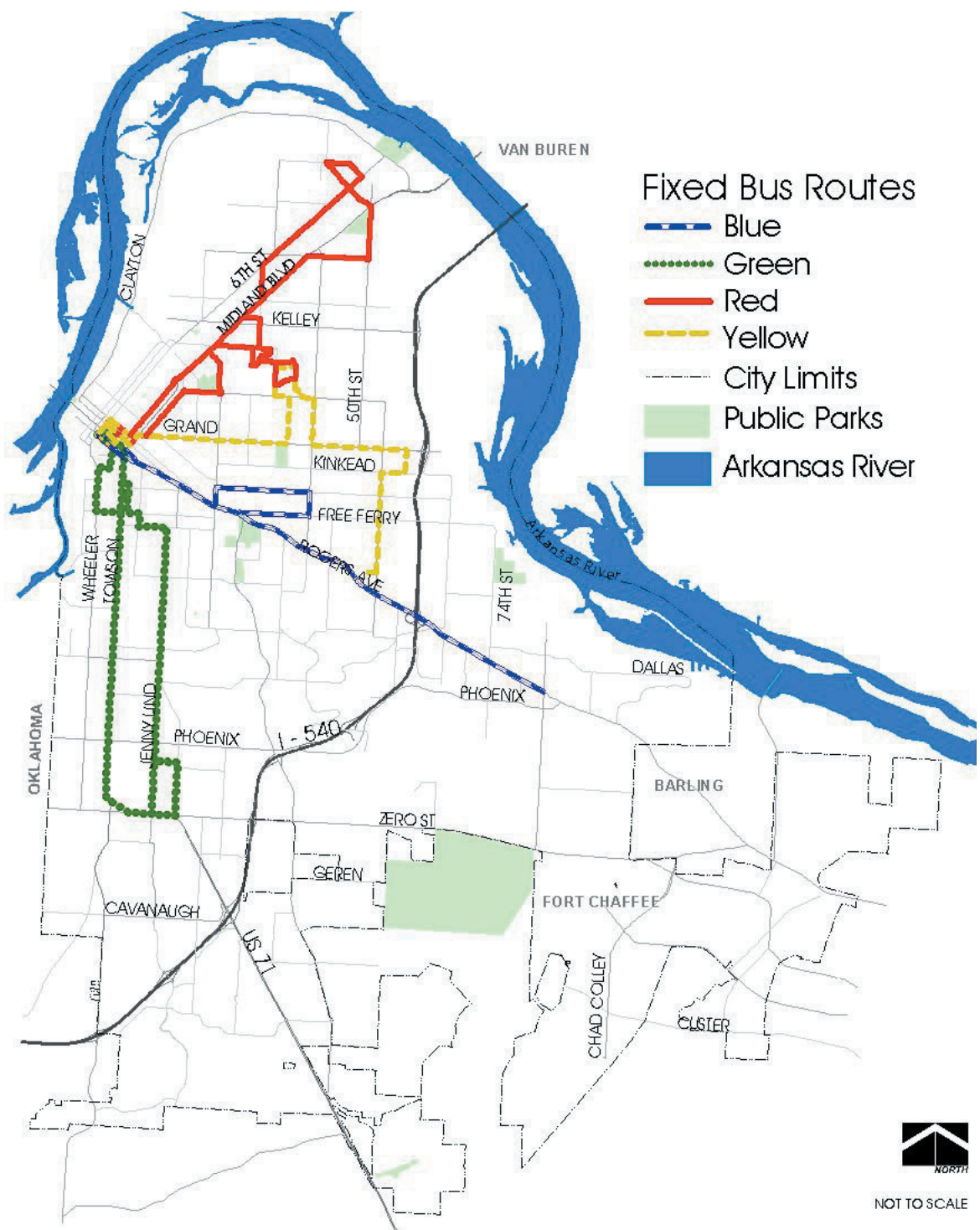


OCTOBER 1, 2002
SOURCE: CITY OF FORT SMITH



Section 4 - Plan Framework

City of Fort Smith Transit Routes



4.2.7 The Public Transit Plan

Public transportation is an essential part of the City's transportation system. It not only serves the more than 10% of households without access to a car, but also can serve any resident needing to get around town. Recent trends have shown a high percentage of children using transit to get to school. The transit system functions most efficiently when it serves high volume destinations and is easily accessed near residences.

GI.12 Policy: Promote and maintain a public transit system that is safe, efficient, cost-effective and responsive to the needs of residents.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Implement land use policies consistent with transportation goals, including greater densities of residential and commercial uses along transit corridors. (57)
- b. Promote mixed-use districts providing office, residential, and commercial within the same development or the same building which are easily served by transit. (58)
- c. Promote employment, critical services and retail development that are along transit routes. (59)
- d. Investigate opportunities and demand for tailored transportation services including demand responsive services for the elderly, and disabled. (60)
- e. Work with the Bi-State MPO on a regional commuter program through partnerships with the business community and economic development agency creating efficient transportation links between potential employees and employment opportunities. (61)
- f. Maintain and enhance convenient transit links from the airport to downtown, providing visitor access to the convention center. Either public or private services would be appropriate. (62)
- g. Include the provision of transit shelters & appropriate facilities in road design and rebuilding projects. (63)
- h. Consider expansion into Van Buren, Barling and Greenwood as part of a transit district. (64)
- i. Consider expanding hours of operation to evening and late night services for different work shifts and downtown entertainment. (65)



4.2.8 Air Transportation

The Fort Smith Regional Airport not only provides a base for corporate, recreational, emergency response, and military training, but it also plays a critical role in serving the commercial aviation needs of businesses and the traveling public. It is important that the City take steps to support the airport in maintaining and expanding these facilities as needed, in conjunction with a larger Airport Area Plan that recommends land uses compatible with airport functioning. This is another example of the important relationship between land use and transportation, and is addressed as well in the Plan Framework (4.1).

G1.13 Policy: Preserve and enhance the air transportation system provided by the Fort Smith Regional Airport, while protecting the public from airport related noise and safety hazards.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Using the airport FAR Land Use Compatibility Guidelines, and the Federal Aviation Regulation Part 150 Noise Study, develop an overlay district for the airport as part of the Airport Area Plan. (66)
- b. Protect existing and planned air flight paths from encroachment of incompatible land uses, and require developers to file an aviation easement with the City and the airport if a proposed development or expansion of an existing use is located in the land area subject to the noise contour overlay. (67)



The new airport terminal opened September 2002

4.2.9 Freight Movement

G1.14 Policy: Ensure that business and industry have sufficient transportation infrastructure to support freight operations and business communications, including rail, air, highways, telecommunications, and pipelines.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Work with the economic development organization to determine infrastructure gaps for planned industry and businesses. (68)b. Explore the use of a TIF district to fund existing infrastructure deficiencies. (69)c. Develop a citywide plan for the future location, service, and maintenance of telecommunication facilities and incorporate standards into the subdivision ordinance. (70) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">d. Concentrate, through land planning and zoning, industry at high access locations and phase-out and prohibit new industry in residential and non-highway and rail accessible locations. (71) |
|---|--|

Truck Routes

G1.15 Policy: Provide convenient, reliable connections between industrial zones and regional highways to facilitate truck traffic that also minimize noise and traffic conflicts with other uses.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Identify alternate truck routes for industrial areas south of downtown that by-pass downtown. (72)b. Continue participation in I-49 Roadbuilder Coalition. (73) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">c. Work with Arkansas and Oklahoma Departments of Transportation and congressional delegations to pursue completion of I-540 south loop to I-40 in Oklahoma. (74) |
|---|---|

Section 4 - Plan Framework

Rail

G1.16 Policy: Fully support the railroad industry in better service through the region and City.

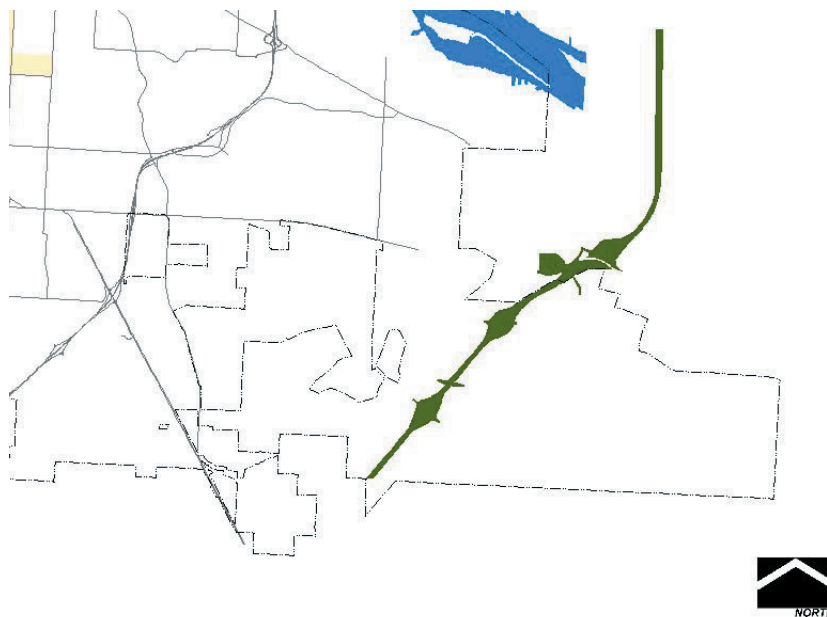
Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Review all railroad crossings for continued delays for both rail cars and vehicle travel. (75)
- b. Improve and maintain all railroad crossing. (76)
- c. Continue to work with railroad companies and rail yard operators of expansion and reduction of lines and facilities. (77)

Water

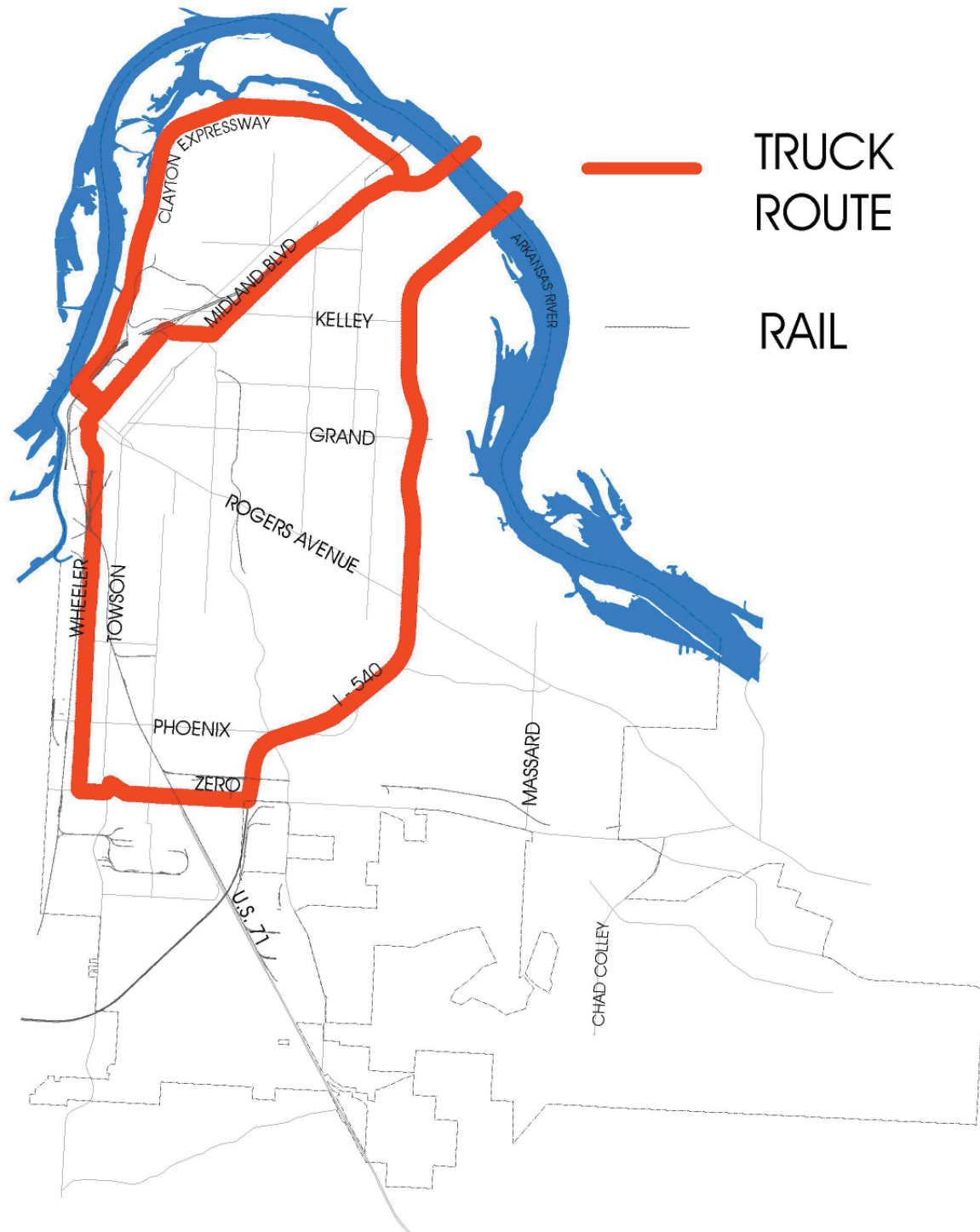
G1.17 Policy: Fully support the continued improvements to the Port of Fort Smith and development of the Van Buren Regional Intermodal Facility

G1.18 Policy: Continue to balance water and port activities with environmental and watershed improvements in full cooperation with the Corps of Engineers.



Proposed I-49 dedicated right-of-way through Chaffee Crossing

City of Fort Smith Freight Movement



NOT TO SCALE



4.3 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goal 3: Develop a coordinated, City economic development policy.

Approach: Initiate proactive steps in cooperation with area Chambers of Commerce, Eastern Oklahoma, Northwest Arkansas, University of Arkansas-Fort Smith, and other institutions for targeted economic development.

G3.1 Policy: Grow the employment base by retaining existing jobs, assisting business expansion and start-ups, and attracting new and diverse businesses

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- | | |
|--|---|
| a. Evaluate the effectiveness of a possible downtown TIF, and investigate improvement or expansion of economic development opportunities in downtown. (78) | incentives to facilitate implementation of decisions by the City and businesses. (81) |
| b. Facilitate partnerships between businesses and higher education institutions to develop programs that share resources and educational opportunities. (79) | e. Establish performance standards for continuing eligibility for tax incentives and other utility subsidies. (82) |
| c. Coordinate reuse of existing commercial and industrial land with land use and transportation goals. (80) | f. Develop start-up incubator spaces for small enterprises within specific zones. (83) |
| d. Establish policy statement on the use of economic development | g. Work with the University and Fort Smith businesses to attract and retain 18-40 year old age group, by providing continuing education, training programs and diverse employment opportunities. (84) |

G3.2 Policy: Organize all economic efforts into a well-coordinated organizational structure.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- | | |
|--|--|
| a. Coordinate all economic development efforts through one entity. (85) | d. Coordinate efforts to recruit companies and jobs in the community through partnership with venture capital companies within the state. (88) |
| b. Adopt an economic development policy and strategic plan. (86) | |
| c. Market the City's location for convention and business meetings. (87) | |

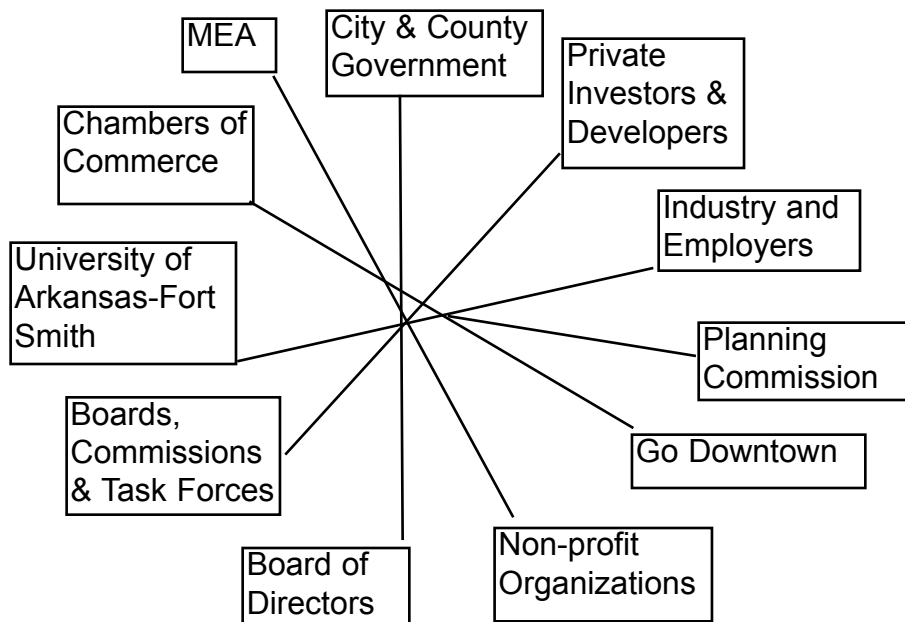
G3.2 Policy: Organize all economic efforts into a well-coordinated organizational structure (continued)

- e. Work together with communities in the Eastern Oklahoma and Western Arkansas region to promote economic development within the region. (89)
- f. Create an entity focused on federal grants and other funding sources, thereby strengthening the ability to leverage all sources. (90)

G3.3 Policy: Establish standard policies for the use of economic development incentives that measure the performance of City investments with a cost/benefit analysis of the actual long-term economic and quality-of-life benefits to the City and region.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Create by resolution, a policy statement regarding the City's use of various economic development incentives to be used as a resource by the economic development organization, businesses, and developers and to be used to quickly evaluate applications for incentives. (91)
- b. Provide infrastructure for the development of a technology park in order to recruit high-tech jobs within the city. (92)



Partners in regional economic development

4.4 NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING

Goal 4: Preserve, protect and improve Fort Smith's neighborhoods

Approach: Create friendly but stringent development ordinances rigorously applied throughout the City to protect existing neighborhoods and to create strong new ones.

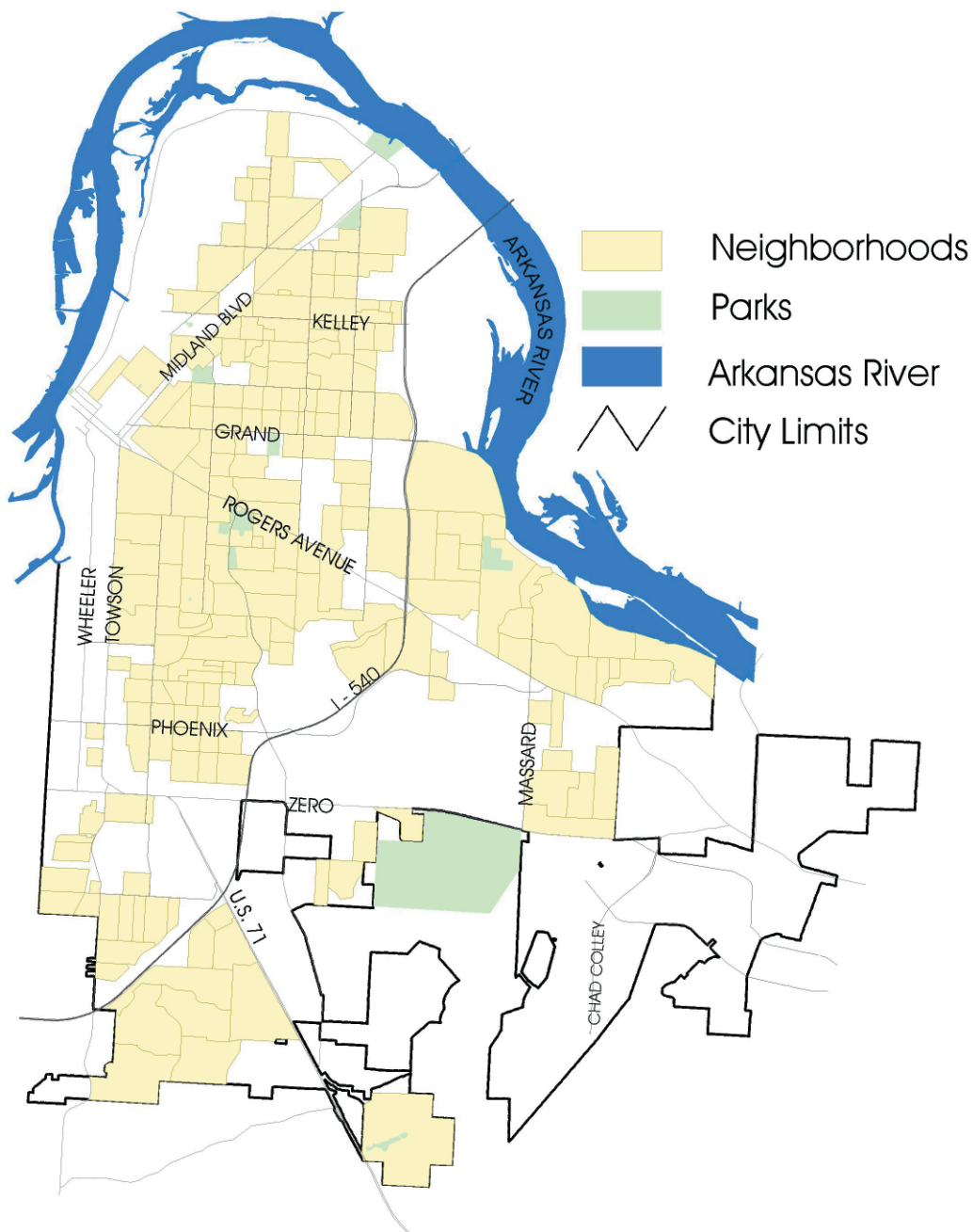
Neighborhood Plans

Neighborhoods are the central theme of the Comprehensive Plan. Subdivisions, school districts, census tracts and blocks, roads, perceived boundaries and wards can all be used to help define neighborhood boundaries. This section of the plan, outlines the role that neighborhoods play in the future growth and development of the city. It also proposes initial neighborhood boundaries to begin the process of developing neighborhood plans and neighborhood organizations.

City of Neighborhoods Plan Themes: Neighborhood Preservation and Revitalization

- City support and promotion of Neighborhood Associations as a critical element in neighborhood preservation, revitalization and planning.
- Rezoning of existing, predominantly, single-family residential neighborhoods where the historic zoning pattern does not reflect the predominant built pattern. Priority will be made in areas where stability and character are threatened.
- Enforcement of property ownership responsibilities for both developed and undeveloped land.
- Accommodate housing opportunities for a variety of life-stages and life styles.
- Existing commercial and industrial activities need to be good neighbors by mitigating impacts, such as restricting illumination spillover to neighborhoods.
- Existing residential activities should be protected from more intense land uses through changes in zoning, design standards, and code enforcement.
- Other social and community issues effecting neighborhoods (accessible supervised activities for youth, homelessness, drug and prostitution trafficking, and overcrowded housing), are best addressed through public/private ventures involving many community and government service providers.
- Sidewalks and pedestrian safety are priorities in the shared public space of neighborhoods.

Proposed Neighborhoods



NOT TO SCALE



Policies

G4.1 Policy : *Improve and encourage maintenance of structures, prevent vagrancy, structural damage, theft, and fire hazards, by providing education, incentives and programs for structural maintenance, particularly in areas designated Neighborhood Revitalization.*

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Create a design guideline document that sets forth policies that distinguishes between contributing and non-contributing structures. Guidelines should include explicit recommendations for contributing structures while imposing less strict guidelines on non-contributing structures. Guidelines should fully address new construction and infill. (93)
- b. Establish low-cost loans/grants for structure maintenance, repair and demolition. (94)
- c. Establish a volunteer advocacy organization similar to "Habitat for Humanity" for historic structures. (95)
- d. Enforce ordinance (Act 1538, passed by the State General Assembly, April 2001) allowing City to secure vacant structures at owner's cost. (96)
- e. Work with county and state officials to develop a special tax incentive for preservation and renovation of historic properties. (97)
- f. Demolish vacant, dilapidated structures at public expense and recover the cost from property owners via a lien placed on the land. The City could also repair a structure and recover the cost from the property owner. (98)
- g. Establish a neighborhood street lighting program using city policies on special assessment districts. (99)
- h. Establish a community paint program which receives and stores paint and works with volunteer programs to assist those unable to accomplish this home maintenance task. (100)
- i. Established minimum property maintenance standards with notices that provide options and possible financial or labor assistance. Standards would address: broken and boarded up windows; appliances and indoor furniture on porches and lawns; non-working vehicles; site drainage; fire and building code hazards; and, on site parking. (101)
- j. Coordinate City tax assessment with the County. Dilapidated areas are over assessed and the real property value needs to be better reflected. (102)

G4.2 Policy : Improve public participation in the revitalization process through the establishment of neighborhood associations and other organizations.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Actively promote the development of neighborhood associations, with city communications and neighborhood training programs. (103)
- b. Utilize Neighborhood Watch organizations, schools, and churches as primary points of citizen contact for communicating planning and development issues within neighborhoods. (104)
- c. Establish policies that exceed legal requirements for notice and public hearings regarding planning and development issues. (105)
- d. Design and provide on-going Internet communication regarding planning and development issues. (106)
- e. Allow neighborhood organizations to establish priorities for localized capital improvement needs within neighborhoods. (107)
- f. Establish a neighborhood advocacy program facilitating communication among and between neighborhoods and the City. (108)

- g. Require a business license for property owners with more than two rental units. Businesses must show proof of paid real estate tax when renewing their license from year to year. This will ensure that the City is reimbursed for any liens that have been placed on the property for clean up. (109)
- h. Establish a “Absentee Owner” ordinance. An owner of a rental property who lives out of the City, should have a local city agent for property management. (110)
- i. Maintain a rental property register to assist with maintenance and code enforcement issues for rental units in residential areas. (111)
- j. Encourage the formation of a landlord association whose purpose would be supporting and increasing the value of their income properties. This association could then keep an ongoing roster of problem tenants. Utility companies may be strong supporters of this association. (112)
- k. Work through, and with, the school system in establishing neighborhood associations. Schools can play an important role in unifying neighborhoods and have in the past offered many outreach efforts such as: police and fire education and preparedness; CDBG 5-year plan activities; resource officers and bicycle patrol routes; supervised after school activities; and PTA involvement. In addition they have traditionally been good community partners in providing meeting space, park and recreation facilities, emergency response and shelter, and acting as a funnel for information delivery. (113)

G4.3 Policy : Maintain housing opportunities in urban areas by renovating and revitalizing existing housing and promoting infill development of vacant land within the corporate limits.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Establish and maintain an inventory of undeveloped land (vacant lots) within existing neighborhoods identifying opportunities, constraints and appropriate uses.. This should be in both map and data form.(114)
- b. Inventory abandoned and dilapidated structures for ownership, value and history for targeting clean up and redevelopment. (115)
- c. Infill development regulations need to reflect existing predominant historic residential character. (116)
- d. Be proactive in creating partnerships with public agencies and private developers to renovate existing housing and construct new housing in infill areas. (117)
- e. Facilitate establishment of neighborhood improvement groups to promote the clean-up and maintenance of private homes, property, public sidewalks and rights-of-way. (118)
- f. Set aside funds for a grant writer who would seek public and private funding for neighborhood development. (119)

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- g. Map and establish priority areas for sewer service up-grades and installation in the older sections of town. Sewer should be provided to those areas that do not have it. Residents may take 10 years to pay an assessment for installation, or matching grant funds (such as CDBG) may be found to assist. (120)
- h. Water service should be updated in areas to allow infill development. (121)
- i. Zoning and subdivision regulations should provide infill development guidelines that more clearly address the character of the neighborhood and neighboring housing. (122)

G4.4 Policy : Provide quality, affordable housing by actively promoting construction of a variety of housing sizes and types through the zoning and subdivision regulations.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Require a mixture of housing size and type within new, large residential subdivisions through Planned Unit Development zoning. (123)
- b. Establish a citizen housing committee to arbitrate disputes between landlords and tenants, and ensure that requirements of fair housing opportunities and housing standards are maintained. (124)
- c. Develop incentive programs to encourage low-interest home loans and education programs for home buyers (such as Fannie Mae involvement) (125)
- d. Identify partners in the business, banking, and development community to finance and construct quality long-term affordable housing that ensures a strong employment base. (126)
- e. Create a Planned Unit Development zone that requires diverse housing types and incentives for affordable units. (127)
- f. Housing density standards need to be incorporated into the housing code. A standard based on number of rooms or square footage is normal. For examples, a 2-bedroom unit may limit occupancy to no more than four people. These elements can also be placed into a standard lease agreement. (128)
- g. The number of automobiles permitted per unit or lot should be modified to reflect square footage of lot and dwelling. A general standard of six cars per residential dwelling is excessive given the size of many historic lots and dwellings. (129)
- h. Discourage and regulate the conversion of single-family homes into multi-family housing. This is a building permit, fire safety, neighborhood preservation and zoning issue. (130)

G4.5 Policy: Provide convenient, safe connections between neighborhoods and important destinations, such as downtown, employment centers, schools, parks, shopping areas, and neighborhood services.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Locate new school sites, parks, recreation centers, and other neighborhood institutions central to residential areas so they are within walking distance for most users. (131)
- b. Establish design standards that integrate compatible neighborhood-supportive retail and services in neighborhoods. (132)
- c. Implement subdivision regulations requiring multiple connections between neighborhoods, and promote pedestrian scale blocks, to increase the variety of routes, transportation options, and accessibility. (133)
- d. Create a safe and enjoyable pedestrian and bicycle circulation system as well as school crossings that complement automobile and bus transportation. (134)
- e. Restore the existing alley system. This action will assist neighborhoods in re-establishing order, alternative property access, parking and trash disposal. (135)
- f. Prohibit commercial access onto "child-access" streets (Dallas, Texas has established this system.). These streets would have libraries, schools, Boys and Girls Clubs, parks or other high traffic children areas. (136)

*“Discourage
and regulate
conversion of
single family homes
into multi-family
housing”*

G4.6 Policy : Plan for senior housing and other special needs populations by locating diverse housing opportunities accessible to shopping, parks, recreation centers, schools, medical care, and public transit.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Implement zoning regulations to allow for condominiums, maintenance provided communities, assisted living and other institutional uses for senior citizens in mixed-use projects. (137)
- b. Require accessibility to public facilities such as shopping, parks, recreation centers, schools, public transit, and medical care as approval criteria for housing projects for seniors. (138)
- c. Establish programs for seniors that can assure their active participation in community events, and reaffirm their value as an education and historical resource for the city. (139)
- d. Facilitate partnerships among various advocacy groups to identify common goals and resource sharing opportunities to benefit senior citizens. (140)
- e. Provide real estate agents with brochures regarding neighborhood associations, historic districts and city services. (141)
- f. Discourage and regulate conversion of single-family homes into multi-family housing. (142)

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G4.7 Policy : Require new subdivisions to develop through public streets.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

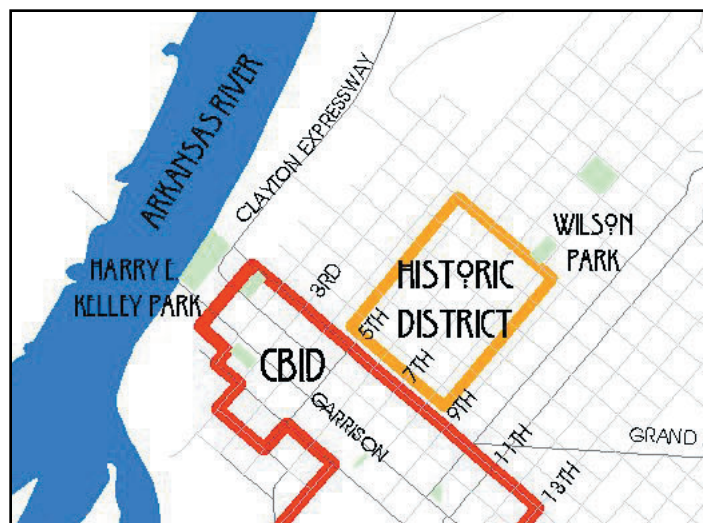
- a. Establish a policy that all infrastructure in new subdivisions must conform to adopted water, sewer, and street standards. (143)
- b. Adopt new subdivision standards promoting traditional neighborhood development. (144)
- c. Establish a street connectivity policy for subdivision design. (145)

G4.8 Policy: Increase public awareness, education and knowledge of the historic district and historic architecture throughout the City.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Link the development of the riverfront, downtown business district, and the historic district as complementary areas to attract tourism, maximizing the Historic Districts' contribution as a sales tax revenue source. (146)
- b. Promote historic preservation as economic development that provides neighborhood stability, community improvement, and tourism opportunities. Use holiday walking tours, fairs and the Focus newsletter to increase appreciation of rich Fort Smith history. (147)
- c. Educate property residents and owners, real estate agents, developers, and other concerned groups on historic architecture and preservation issues through information packets and newsletters. (148)
- d. Improve the perception and appeal of older neighborhoods by cooperative sponsorship of rehabilitation workshops and home tours. (149)

Belle Grove Historic District and Historic Preservation



G4.9 Policy: Encourage revitalization of the Belle Grove historic district and downtown historic buildings.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Make provision in building code standards for reasonably evaluating historic property restoration projects that may not be able to meet all new construction methods and building materials. (150)
- b. Continue support of grant writers to assist property owners in obtaining funding for restoration of historic buildings. (151)
- c. Establish regulatory standards for maintaining building exteriors and landscaping for housing in the historic district. (152)
- d. Increase police patrol and enforcement to reduce the negative impact of heavy truck traffic and speeding through the Historic District. (153)
- e. Promote an atmosphere of community cohesiveness through activities promoting preservation awareness such as street fairs, picnics, tours, preservation awards, and workshops. (154)
- f. Increase public awareness and maximize the District's potential as a revenue source. (155)
- g. Link the development of the river-front, downtown business district, and the historic district as complementary areas to attract tourism. (156)
- h. Support historic preservation as a contribution to economic development. Acknowledge that preservation provides neighborhood stability and tourism opportunities (i.e. walking tours, Christmas tours, etc.). (157)
- i. Increase public visibility of and within the district including routes for walking tours, carriage tours, buses, and trolley. (158)
- j. Complete the renovation of the Darby Community Center and use it as a focal point for district and community events. (159)
- k. Establish transitional zoning to encourage high-quality single and two-family residential development as a buffer around the District. (160)
- l. Regulate and restore dwelling unit densities. (161)
- m. Establish public policy that requires historic resources to be preserved when possible, and demolished only when no other feasible alternative exists. (162)
- n. Educate district residents and owners, real estate agents, developers, and other concerned groups on the mission and procedures of the Historic District Commission with information packet and regular newsletter. (163)
- o. Work with a design firm to develop a template for the historic district that includes architectural elements, landscaping, pedestrian street lighting that links the downtown to the historic district, and other street furniture elements. (164)
- p. Implement a regular maintenance program to remove dead trees and trim overgrowth of trees and shrubs. (165)



4.5 PARKS AND RECREATION

Goal 5: Expand city parkland and recreational programming to reflect or exceed national standards

Approach: Take advantage of underutilized space, create a variety of recreation opportunities, and continue to pursue, expand, and implement current park plans.

Context

The value of parks, recreation and open space within a community has been measured and found to improve the daily quality of life of residents. They provide environmental, personal, social and economic benefits to the City as a whole through:

- increased property values;
- providing economic impact from sports events, special events and festivals;
- adding value to businesses in reduced stress and lower absenteeism;
- attracting new high tech industries that can locate their business solely based on quality of life;
- retaining existing businesses;
- strengthening family and community relationships;
- preserving open space and natural features within an urban setting; and,
- improved health and physical fitness opportunities.

Coinciding with the Tornado in 1996, the Parks and Recreation Riverfront Master Plan initiative, was conducted in 1995-96 by the Board of Directors appointed Riverfront Task Force and a consulting team. This plan illustrated a linear riverfront trail, the Pavilions and Riverfront Amphitheater, and additional recreation facilities. Much of this plan has been acted on, with the riverfront trail system being completed in segments.

In 1999, the City undertook a parks and recreation needs assessment and strategic planning process. These efforts resulted in a Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan, May 2000, which has been the basis for much of the work of the Department of Parks and Recreation and the Parks and Recreation Commission. Through this strategic effort the Commission pursued several key initiatives and established a vision and mission for their continuing work.

Mission: *To provide quality parks, recreation and leisure services for our diverse regional community.*

Vision: *A united community enjoying a fully resourced and networked system of parks, leisure and recreation activities.*

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An understanding of City and regional needs was derived using a systematic random survey sample of Fort Smith residents, demographic research, studies of national standards and surveys of other City park and recreation programs. This work, along with comprehensive plan community workshops, forms the basis of the park component of the City plan.

Community surveys, and research on recreation facility demand standards, revealed strong desires and need for:

- A nature center
- Structured summer programs
- Senior adult and family recreation programs
- Tennis courts
- Soccer fields
- Picnic facilities
- Baseball fields
- Softball fields
- Bird Sanctuary
- Community recreation center
- Gazebos and picnic tables
- Water parks and features
- Indoor pool
- Skateboarding facilities
- Bike trails, multi-purpose trails, and nature or natural trails
- Organized recreation programming for all ages and abilities

The seven member Parks and Recreation Commission acts in an advisory capacity to the Board of Directors and the Director of Community Services, in promoting, planning, maintaining, developing and operating all recreation areas owned, controlled or leased by the City.

Plan Elements

The parks and recreation component of the Comprehensive Plan incorporates the May 2000 Strategic Plan, the work conducted by the Commission and the Parks and Recreation Department since that time, community input from the comprehensive planning process in 2001-2002, and the efforts of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. Input from residents during the planning process was extensive, and could be broken down into four major categories, or areas of focus:

1. Regional Facilities
2. Neighborhood Parks
3. Greenways and Trails
4. Recreation Programming

4.5.1 Regional Facilities

The development of regional scale facilities acknowledges Fort Smith's role within the larger region. The need for facilities that serve the City and neighboring community soccer, baseball, and softball leagues is apparent in the solidly booked fields. Larger trail systems and one-of-a-kind facilities such as skate parks, ice rinks, water parks, indoor pools, interpretive centers, and marinas serve the larger region.



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G5.1 Policy: Promote and establish regional support for Fort Smith Parks and Recreation through agreements, user fees, programs and grant applications with counties and neighboring towns.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Create a long-range plan for the development of the Riverfront into green-space that can be utilized by the community and larger region. Include regional softball, baseball and soccer fields and an extensive trail system. Consider a minor league baseball stadium. (166)
- b. Promote and establish cooperative recreation specific partnerships with schools, corporate sponsors, church groups, and other organizations to fund, operate, and supervise youth, teen and elderly programs. (167)
- c. Investigate a partnership arrangement with the county on Ben Geren Park or transfer title to the City. Consider over-
- d. Establish a dedicated revenue source and various funding sources for parks and recreation in order to get the quantity and quality of parks up to national standards and to meet the needs of the regional community. (169)
- e. Consider a Park and Recreation District with neighboring jurisdictions. (170)
- f. Develop a classification system for existing and planned facilities, in order to establish facility needs and improvement gaps. (171)

4.5.2 Neighborhood Parks

Existing parks do not adequately serve the heart of the City, the corners of the City or the eastern central portion of the City. Facilities to the south are also lacking. As the City has grown into the county, planning has not taken into account additional recreation needs. Nationally, a standard of a half-mile service area is considered appropriate for neighborhood parks.

G5.2 Policy: Develop neighborhood parks amenities within walking distance to residents.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Minimum facilities could include picnic tables, half-court basketball, playground equipment, natural passive recreation areas, shade trees, wildlife habitat and low maintenance landscaping and lighting. (172)
- b. Small neighborhood parks are needed in many areas including South Zero Street, Highway 271 to 28th Street, Phoenix to Zero (N-S), 24th to 34th Streets, and South and East of I-540. (173)
- c. Establish open space and parks standards for all development. Apply this standard to all existing and new development. Identify existing deficiencies and identify diverse means to eliminate deficiencies. (174)
- d. Investigate a park impact fee or land dedication (a portion of property to park space) in-lieu-of fee for future large residential developments. This would be on a per household basis, for example using the national standard of .16 acres of land per household. (175)

4.5.3 Greenways and Trails

Establish a greenway trail system as connections between centers, public services and as primary linkages between schools, parks, libraries, post offices, groceries and medical facilities. A multi-purpose trail and transportation system is a main element in the City of Neighborhoods, and would serve primary destinations, using natural and man made paths, from sidewalks, abandoned rail, and watercourses to create continuous pedestrian and bicycle paths.

G5.3 Policy: Develop greenways and trails that serve to connect the city.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- | | |
|---|--|
| a. Establish short-range trails to centers, libraries, schools, shopping, and parks. (179) | d. Work with transportation planning on connecting parks through bicycle and pedestrian routes (178) |
| b. Address riparian corridors; stream valley and drainage areas that can be park and pedestrian friendly trail systems, or primarily habitat and aesthetic community amenities. (176) | e. Pursue advanced public acquisition of parkland and additional right-of-way according to a long-range park plan. (179) |
| c. Convert abandoned railroad tracks to multi-purpose trails. (177) | |

4.5.4 Recreation Programming

Recreational facilities require programming and coordination. Scheduling, maintenance, building partnerships, facility improvements and running programs are a function of the Parks and Recreation Department. After school and weekend leagues and programs for all ages are run by a variety of organizations that work in conjunction with the City.

G5.4 Policy: Plan recreation facility land, space and programming needs with other service providers in order to meet community needs and national standards.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- | | |
|---|--|
| a. Hire a full time recreation director to make sure parks are fully utilized and meeting the needs of the community. (180) | d. Initiate, expand, manage and program indoor and outdoor facilities and programs. (183) |
| b. Coordinate with other recreation community providers to meet supervised and general program needs. (181) | e. Provide general leagues for kids, attractions for ages 16-20, supervised teen centers for summer and after school activities, and programs for adults ages 20-45. (184) |
| c. Plan and coordinate special events, tournaments and games. (182) | |

4.6 THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

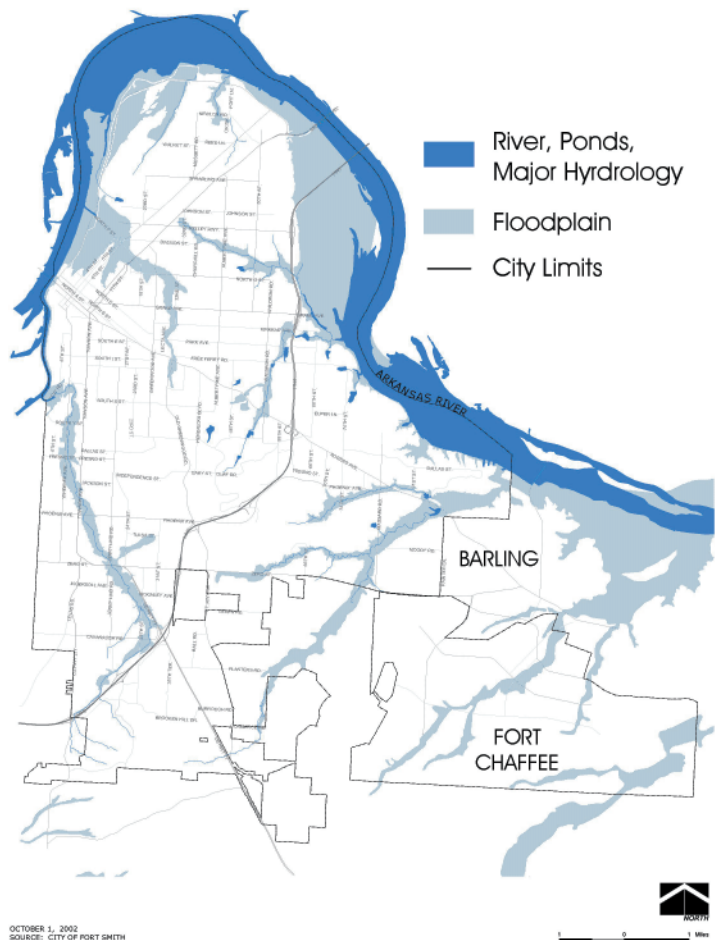
Goal 6 : **Protect natural resources and reduce their waste and overuse**

Approach: Inventory of significant natural resources and establish goals for resource protection, conservation and waste reduction.

Preservation of natural resources assumes that all development works with the natural features of the site to protect and enhance these as assets to the community. This Comprehensive Plan policy will direct zoning, subdivision and building permit processes to be revised to reflect best land management practices. The City of Fort Smith will be revising development standards to partner with the State of Arkansas' targeted goals in meeting federal EPA benchmarks.

Arkansas State Environmental Quality

In 1999, the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality was directed to develop a 10-year strategic plan. In 2000, the 2001-2011 Strategic Plan was adopted, and it laid forth goals, objectives and strategies for land, air and water quality to meet federal environmental protection agency standards. While the Strategic Plan is within a 10-year period, it sets forth benchmarks, performance standards and strategies that the City can pursue for the life of the Comprehensive Plan. For the City of Fort Smith to be a partner in meeting state goals and standards, the following goals and objectives need to be incorporated in City policies and plans. The goals and objectives are worded for statewide application, and can be easily applied to City activities.



Air - The air is clean and healthy.

1. Utilize a multifaceted approach of monitoring, modeling, and inventorying to assess air quality for 100% of the population in Arkansas.
2. Reduce the number of days that the Air Quality Index exceeds federal standards.
3. Ensure emissions from regulated facilities are below risk-based standards for public health.
4. Ensure that 90% of regulated facilities will be in compliance with all state and federal air standards by 2010.
5. In areas of concern, reduce emissions from mobile sources and from small sources not required to have an air permit.

"Though born in Arkansas, I lived in Ft. Worth for 20 years & learned to appreciate what a lot of people here take for granted. I see the environment destroyed unnecessarily. In a society of vanishing areas of natural beauty, we have an opportunity to set an example - that we can work with nature. Progress & preservation can co-exist. Let's learn from other cities that are doing things right!"

Water - the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of all Arkansas waters are protected and enhanced.

1. By 2010, 90% of assessed surface water in Arkansas will meet water quality standards for all beneficial uses.
2. Issue all required Water Quality Management Plans by 2010.
3. Develop voluntary watershed management systems for all impaired rivers and streams by 2010 to support the TMDL (total maximum daily load) implementation program.
4. Prevent future contamination of ground water.
5. Remediate contaminated ground water to usable levels at 1000 sites by 2010.
6. By 2003, the Water Division will form a task force made up of all interested parties to select ground water clean-up standards for contaminated sites as part of new ground water regulations.

Land - Land based activities achieve, maintain and enhance a healthy environment

1. Regulated land-based activities are safely managed.
2. Return 6,635 acres of known environmentally impacted land to productive use by 2010.
3. Increase the amount of hazardous waste recycled, reclaimed, used, or reused by 20% by 2010.
4. Reduce the amount of solid waste sent to landfills by 40% by 2005 and 45% by 2010, based on a year-to-year comparison.

"We need policies which strongly encourage developers to keep trees (rather than cut them down) and to plant trees. Please no more parking lot "deserts" like at Wal-Mart & Central Mall. (Gloria Tran)"

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Policies

G6.1 Policy: Develop and manage watershed programs to minimize pollution from storm water runoff and other sources.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Require landscaping and minimize impermeable surfaces of all developments to help retain and drain water on site. Impermeable surfaces and poor grading contribute to high event storm water runoff. All development needs to address stormwater event loading on-site and downstream. This is called total maximum daily loading or TMDL's. (185)
- b. Work with the Corps of Engineers in developing revisions to the floodway and floodplain water management programs effecting the City and the City's Arkansas Riverfront. (186)
- c. Establish water quality benchmarks. (187)
- d. Assess and address groundwater contamination. (188)

G6.2 Policy: Preserve wildlife habitats

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Inventory wetland and vegetation habitats for both migratory and resident species. Work with environmental, birding and conservation organizations in mapping known habitats. (189)
- b. Incorporate the protection or replacement of these areas in development guidelines. (190)
- c. Manage public open space, easements, drainage and retention ponds, utility easements, stream channels and greenways as a public asset. Finance and negotiate future public use through lease and franchise agreements. These areas often provide more efficient construction and maintenance of facilities for private entities. (191)
- d. Protect riparian corridors through erosion control and drainage management. In many cases this means unchanneling concrete stream beds, replanting wetlands for water absorption and allowing natural drainage. These stream valley and drainage areas can be park and pedestrian friendly trail systems, or primary habitat and aesthetic community amenities. (192)



Preservation of the natural environment

G6.3 Policy: Improve air quality by encouraging responsible industry practices and reducing other mobile sources of air pollution.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

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| <p>a. Develop an air quality program based on National Ambient Air Quality Standards, for forecasting, education, and mitigating options for daily activities that affect air quality. (193)</p> <p>b. Implement a non-burning leaf disposal program. Fine burning within city limits. (194)</p> <p>c. Promote, recognize, and award industry and businesses for innovative practices that reduce sources of</p> | <p>air pollution in their operations or among the activities of their employees. This could include car pooling and alternate mode transportation support. (195)</p> <p>d. Promote and develop a variety of modes of travel to reduce auto emissions. (196)</p> <p>e. Route truck traffic and plan industrial developments for the shortest trip lengths through, and out of town. (197)</p> |
|--|--|

G6.4 Policy: Enhance and promote Fort Smith's recycling and reuse programs.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>a. Investigate a "pay-as-you-throw" program that charges residents based on the volume of trash they produce. Coupled with a recycling program, this can serve as an incentive to recycle more and preserve costs and space in the landfill. (198)</p> <p>b. Pursue all available funding sources for residential and business-recycling programs, including grants, special assessments or general funds. (199)</p> <p>c. Provide education for residents regarding recycling issues including methods of reducing waste and re-using recycled material. (200)</p> | <p>d. Promote, recognize, and award industries and businesses that implement programs to reduce, re-use, and recycle in their operations or among the activities of their employees. (201)</p> |
|--|--|



4.7 URBAN DESIGN, ARTS AND COMMUNITY AESTHETICS

Goal 7: Adopt design standards and city signature look for public improvements.

Approach: Take advantage of current momentum in creating the "look of Fort Smith" and translate community support for quality urban design into consistent, enforceable design standards leveraging public and private investments as incentives for more investment in quality design.

Early on in the planning process the "look of Fort Smith" was discussed and began to be defined. The new and old architecture of the city was admired as was the new landscaping efforts made by both public and private entities. It was soon decided that achieving an admirable and distinguishable "look" to the City, would accomplish both economic and quality-of-life goals. The Plan's approach to urban design encompasses site design, complimentary land uses, identifiable architecture and City signage, acknowledging distinct districts, neighborhoods and gateways. It also encourages partnerships in the design community in a variety of City beautification efforts. General themes include:

- A community commitment to enforce consistent streetscape, site and building standards.
- Continuing the new look that started with the River Park, Convention Center and Library buildings.
- Look to Fort Chaffee to set new design and development standards
- Well preserved historic and architectural resources.
- Expanding the City's role in the region as a center for the arts.
- Benchmarking other cities for inspiration regarding urban design.
- Encouraging high quality development that supports the scale and character of existing neighborhoods.
- Restored landscapes, commercial corridor and districts.
- Enhanced pedestrian experiences throughout the City.

Policies

G7.1 Policy: Preserve and protect Fort Smith's historic and architectural resources.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Link the development of the river-front, downtown business district, and the historic district as complementary areas to attract tourism, maximizing the Historic District's contribution as a revenue source. (202)
- b. Inventory Fort Smith's historic and architectural assets, and commit technical and financial assistance to preserve eligible structures. (203)

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- c. Establish preservation policies for the City, which sets criteria for public assistance and tax incentives to encourage preservation. (204)
- d. Promote the use of zoning regulations to preserve eligible structures, either at the property owner's initiation or upon the City's own initiative. (205)
- e. Establish design standards for infill development that will complement, but not replicate, historic elements of adjacent historic structures or districts. (206)

G7.2 Policy: Encourage the inclusion of public art and plazas with new public facilities and major private development.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Establish a "1% for the arts" program. This can be done in several ways, setting aside 1% of all capital budget expenditures for incorporation of artistic elements, or other development fees. (207)
- b. Work with the school district, University, and Fort Smith Art Quest to manage and promote public art programs and public-private-institutional partnerships for furthering artistic endeavors. (208)
- c. Sponsor art and mural competitions for prominent walls, intersections and gateways. (209)



Partnership with University



Help from private sector

G7.3 Policy: Enlist the vision and support of the arts community and seek partnerships with the University, convention center and other interest groups to advance opportunities for visual and performing arts within the region.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Appoint a citizen arts commission of qualified and interested citizens to promote public art or work with existing organizations (such as Art Quest) to fulfill that role within the City. An arts commission could serve as ambassador for performing and public art, and would coordinate implementation of public art policies and actions. (210)
- b. Establish contacts with other institutional art programs and identify common goals or opportunities for shared resources. (211)
- c. Create a grant program for public art projects and competitions. (212)
- d. Expand opportunities to experience and participate in live performances. (213)
- e. Establish public-private partnership to locate performing arts venue in downtown. (214)



Section 4 - Plan Framework

G7.4 Policy: Establish a public museum of art and an interactive children's museum

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Work with CBID, corporations, and the philanthropic community to locate a museum of art in downtown. (215)
- b. Work with church, schools, libraries and boys and girls clubs to establish an interactive children's museum. (216)

G7.5 Policy : Improve gateway features, commercial corridors and scenic views within the City.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Implement public streetscape plan as part of the CIP, including maintenance and expansion of street trees and the use of public planting areas. (217)
- b. Establish signature look for gateway entry features to the City. (218)
- c. Establish regular volunteer, merchant and city maintenance programs to remove weeds and litter from the public rights-of-way. This city program would not be a Parks and Recreation Department responsibility. (219)
- d. Facilitate neighborhood beautification programs for voluntary clean up of streets and neighborhoods by civic groups. (220)
- e. Permit only temporary use of portable signs and do not permit any new billboards within the City. These should be phased out over time. (221)
- f. Enhance building standard requirements by prohibiting metal buildings on highly visible commercial corridors. (222)
- g. Implement exterior lighting standards. (223)



Improve gateways



Enhance landscaping



Chess players on the 16th Street Mall in Denver

G7.6 Policy: Implement programs to enhance landscaping and tree conservation.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

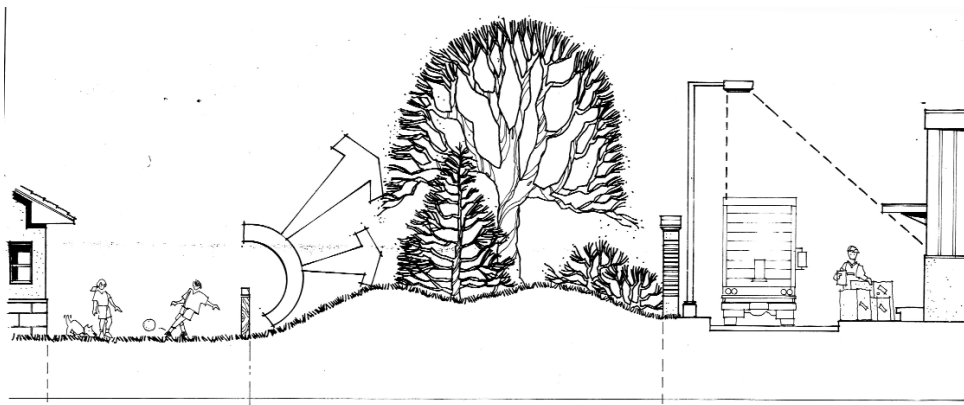
- a. Establish tree protection plan to conserve existing trees and to maintain old growth trees in developed areas. (224)
- b. Create and adopt landscape standards for commercial and residential developments that require street trees and low maintenance shrubs and perennials. (225)
- c. Require intense commercial and industrial uses to be screened from public rights-of-way and adjacent properties. (226)

G7.7 Policy: Integrate existing commercial activities within residential neighborhoods by enforcing quality urban design, and prohibiting further commercial and industrial uses in neighborhoods.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Develop design guidelines for neighborhood supportive retail services to allow better integration within residential areas of existing commerce. (227)
- b. Ensure adequate screening and buffering of industrial areas and major commercial areas from residential uses. Techniques could include, burms, evergreens, wooden fencing, and increased set-backs. (228)
- c. Restrict commercial lighting through height, wattage, and type from spillover light pollution into adjacent residential neighborhoods. (229)
- d. Maintain all sidewalks to reduce the need for full replacement due to root damage and grass over growth. (230)
- e. Require sidewalks and landscaping as part of all construction. (231)
- f. Limit site impacts of loading, trash removal and other business noise and visual pollution adjacent to residential areas, through better design and limitations on hours of specific activities. (232)

Urban Design - Residential and Commercial Neighbors





SECTION 5

Area Planning

SECTION 5

Area Planning

This section of the plan sets direction for four areas critical to the growth and development of the city: the downtown, the riverfront, Fort Chaffee and the area known as Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ), where there is increasing development pressure south of the city. As with Section 4 of the plan, Section 5 outlines policies and recommended actions. It was beyond the scope of the Comprehensive Plan to accomplish detailed parcel specific land use and zoning plans for these areas, however, general land use and design guidelines were established. Following these recommended actions, together with the process for area, center and district planning laid out in Section 4.1 (pages 4-2 through 4-12), more detailed area specific plans should be easily adopted.

5.1 DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT

Goal 8: Revitalize downtown into a multipurpose activity center.

Approach: Create an AM/PM activity center with a consistent image and strategy for redevelopment. Identify opportunities for public participation, and establish incentives and market niche strategies.

Downtown Vision

- Focus on diverse entertainment rather than retail
- Stimulating things to do and see
- Additional retail: coffee shop, grocery, and more specialty shops
- Events and activities for the 35-54 age group
- Additional housing - Loft residential targeted to singles and couples of all ages and strong neighborhood links
- Convention center tourism
- Historic districts and rich architectural character
- Revitalized riverfront linked by foot to downtown and neighborhoods
- Cultural focus geared to people of all ages

Policies and Downtown Plan Elements

- Link downtown entertainment to Produce Row and the riverfront
- Develop the John Paul Hammerschmidt Interpretive Center
- "Hands on" interactive centers such as: history of Fort Smith; something river-based; end of the Trail of Tears; nature; or industry
- Benchmark Chattanooga as a model to continue to expand and develop activities and destinations along the riverfront: a children's museum or other family-oriented destination; a marina; residential, commercial and recreation mixed use development
- Strategic investment, expanding attractions from the river south
- Expand streetscape improvements to Immaculate Conception Church and the southern downtown gateways
- Provide architectural continuity with proposed and future buildings
- Develop portfolio of financial assistance mechanisms to rehabilitate historic buildings
- Utilize existing assets and investments first
- Promote Convention Center activity expansion of additional hotels and restaurants
- Create a new upbeat, "uptown downtown," brand/image
- Define and promote the downtown as a series of districts to include: specialty retail destination district; a government "campus" district (federal, state and local); business, financial and corporate center; cultural and entertainment center; Convention Center; arts and entertainment, and riverfront.



5.1.1 Downtown Framework - Districts

A. Riverfront Area A, West - Industrial

Area A, north of Dodson, surrounding Andrews Baseball Field and the National Cemetery, has the potential overtime to evolve into housing with access to the river. This area does not have good highway access for industry or commercial development although rail access is directly available. The central location, however, makes it more suited for uses not dependent on the high movement of goods by means other than rail.



Bridge Over Arkansas River



Historic Fort Smith

B. Riverfront Area B, Downtown Cultural/Heritage Destinations

- Expansion of the National Cemetery to Andrews Baseball Field
- Increased pedestrian signage to and from Convention Center — Garrison Avenue and Heritage destinations
- Consolidate parking in conjunction with downtown circulation plan
- Strong integration with transit and event planning

C. Riverfront Area C, Downtown-Riverfront-East Gateway

- Downtown and city bridge gateway, between 2nd - 5th Streets, Rogers and "B" Streets
- Strategic location, three to six blocks, mixed-density residential into Belle Grove Historic District
- 2-3 stories, 5th to Ridgeline, highest structures at entry of Produce Row

- Strong Cultural and Heritage destination flavor- celebration of Fort Smith
- Directional signs for parking off Garrison onto side street parking garages
- Priority investment area

D. Riverfront Area D, Northeast Downtown

- "H" Street — 5th Street — Transition and pedestrian connections with Belle Grove Historic District - create a zone restrictive area
- "H" Street — "D" Street to the Clayton Expressway is the perceived boundary
- Long-term area redevelopment issues include flooding and drainage, and existing heavy industry (Recycling Plant, Refrigeration Plant, transformer)
- "P" Plant and outlet (12 acres) are an obstacle for trails extension
- Paths linkage with River and Downtown Neighborhoods
- Explore the possibility of an Interpretive Center
- Housing and access as transition from river to neighborhoods

E. Riverfront Area E, Clayton Expressway South

- Regional sports complex and supportive commercial services - sports bar, ice cream
- Connection from North "P" , Kelly Highway or Johnson Street extension to Clayton Expressway with the possibility of taller residential structures....4-6 stories, Spradling — Kelly — "P" Street Area

Section 5 - Area Planning

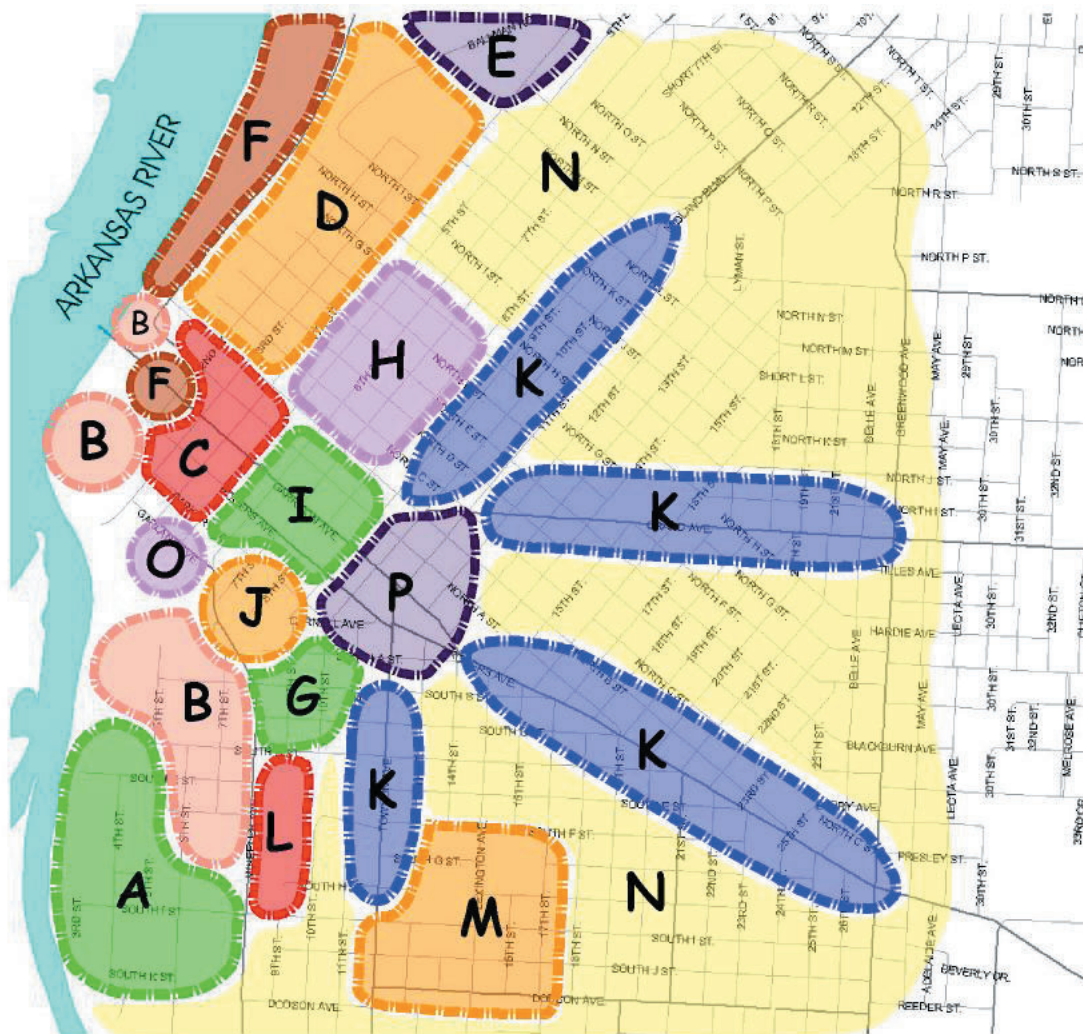
F. Riverfront Area F River Frontage

- South Area F — Riverfront restaurants — indoor and outdoor and office uses
- Marina — limitations on number and type of mortgages (a large high speed boating marina may negatively effect office, housing, tourism and concert events.) A public or private venture with conditions of operation
- River trail with river wildlife and wetland interpretive center, north east
- Transportation (Hammerschmidt) Interpretive Center

G. Downtown District G, Government Campus

- Defined by Wheeler, Towson, Rogers and "D" Street
- Current site of City Police Department and Jail
- Planned expansion site of County Sheriff's Office and Court's Building
- Appropriate location for new City Hall, U.S. Attorney's Building and other public government facilities

Downtown Districts



Section 5 - Area Planning

H. Downtown District H, Belle Grove Historic District

- Paths and borders with downtown should be strengthened, with dominant pedestrian path designated
- History and relevance of architecture can be promoted through convention tourism and events



Downtown Fort Smith

I. Downtown District I, Business District

- 6th to 9th Streets, Rogers to "B" Street, 2 to 10 stories — highest concentration of high-rise buildings
- Active ground floor retail, business support services, and dining
- Office, business and banking, and high end retail concentration



Example of Pedestrian Oriented Downtown

J. Downtown District J, Convention Center

- Rogers, 7th Street and Wheeler to 9th Street with primary entrances at 9th and Wheeler
 - Clearly mark transit and transportation options and pedestrian signage to river front, Garrison, and National sites
 - Restore active ground floor retail from Convention Center to major destinations to address visitor markets
- Appropriate complimentary uses include an additional hotel, dining, sundries, specialty retailers, coffee shop, art and cultural center, with evening hours of operation



Convention Center

K. Downtown District K, Corridor Gateways

- Restore historic sidewalk frontage for one and two-story structures
- Consolidate parking for multiple tenant structures
- Zone for support business and neighborhood commercial, errand shopping, including movie rentals, dry cleaning, drug store, flower, coffee, bakery, office support services, gifts, banking, grocery, daycare, recreational, entertainment and sports activities
- Clearly mark North "A" and "B" Streets as a one-way pairs serving downtown. Create strong entry points along Garrison Avenue, using triangulation as an opportunity for urban design and landscaped gateway features

L. Downtown District L, Corridor Gateways

- South of "B" to Dodson or "I" Streets, and Wheeler to Towson Avenue, in mixed-use one and two story structures

M. Downtown District M, Sparks Regional Medical Center

- Map medical facilities use and expansion plans - define area of influence and space needs
- Address neighboring residential use concerns
- Connect Sparks with Towson and Rogers medical supportive commercial activities
- Prioritize and mark emergency routes and clearly mark all transportation mode access

**N. Downtown District N,
Downtown Neighborhoods —
Revitalization**

- Strengthen paths to downtown and corridor destinations through sidewalk restoration
- Specify children safety zones around school and recreation facilities
- Define neighborhood organizations and area plans for revitalization
- Define areas of mixed-use, neighborhood centers and areas of zoning change and needed buffers between uses

**O. Downtown District O,
Convention Center West**

This area links the Convention Center with the National Historic Sites to the north and southwest. Currently, it houses two prominent government structures of historic architectural value: older industrial structures in various states of repair and reuse, including a bakery adjacent to the Convention Center. Wheeler, and the existing truck route through town, effectively cut the Convention Center off from the National Historic site.

Uses could include mixed-use, live/work, office and tourist attractions. State and Federal offices connect with the business district along Garrison Avenue and may continue to operate as a connection between the business district and the government campus to the south.

**P. Downtown District P, Downtown
East**

- Gateways: East and Portal, divided into two areas — East: Grand, North "B" and 9th - 11th. Portal: Towson, Rogers, and Garrison Avenues to North "A" Street
- Mixed-Use Arts District — visual and performing arts connected with the Convention Center via 9th promoting the revival of the historic theater
- Live/work, art studios, gallery spaces, complimentary, specialty retail, dining and bakeries
- Appropriate uses for housing connected to historic district via 9th Street
- Use triangular opportunities for public art and landscaping to designate district and downtown gateways



Downtown Fort Smith



Downtown Fort Smith

5.1.2 Policies

Housing

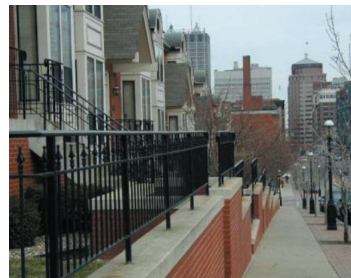
G8.1 Policy: Increase the number and type of residential opportunities in and around downtown.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Expand opportunities for residential "loft" development in existing buildings and new development through provisions and incentives in zoning codes and building regulations. (233)
- b. Link surrounding neighborhoods with downtown, both physically and perceptually, particularly Belle Grove. This includes increasing options for access through all modes of transportation and enhancing the aesthetic elements of transportation corridors to ensure safe and inviting travel. (234)
- c. Identify hotel opportunities, and promote reinvestment or reuse of existing facilities, to serve convention functions, tourism and businesses. (235)
- d. Develop infill urban housing north of "B" Street between 3rd and 5th.
- e. Identify areas for infill residential development and investigate financial and regulatory incentives that can ensure a mixture of housing opportunities. (236)
- f. Develop and increase use of loan and grant programs for eligible residential redevelopment and maintenance programs for older neighborhoods in and around downtown. (237)
- g. Downtown housing alternatives — require housing as a percentage in districts with ground floor pedestrian experience requirements. Explore live/work alternatives and warehouse conversion to minimally improved studio space. (238)



*Example of
loft conversions*



*Example of
downtown housing*

Access and Circulation

G8.2 Policy : Improve the accessibility of downtown by; increasing public transit access, implementing an efficient parking plan, and creating safe and attractive pedestrian and bicycle connections within downtown and between adjacent neighborhoods.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Re-route truck traffic around downtown. (239)
- b. Create primary pedestrian connections between riverfront, historic districts, Sparks and downtown. (240)
- c. Prioritize pedestrian and bicycle facilities within downtown on the CIP, particularly pedestrian-oriented streetscape elements, traffic-calming devices, and street lighting. (241)
- d. Revise downtown zoning and design standards to require pedestrian orientation for building and site design. (242)
- e. Develop a downtown parking plan that; maximizes the use of on-street or existing parking facilities, encourages non-automobile travel to and within downtown, and accounts for increased residential development and transit. (243)
- f. Link downtown to the riverfront through pedestrian-oriented streetscape elements, ground floor retail, dining, recreational and entertainment opportunities. (244)
- g. Extend the trolley to Miss Laura's, to Immaculate Conception Church and through the Belle Grove Historic District and integrate the trolley more fully with all events and attractions. (245)
- h. Wide sidewalks are appropriate to create outdoor dining opportunities. Owner (tenet) should have responsibility for sidewalk image in front of property. (246)
- i. Wayfinding should be geared toward both pedestrians and vehicles. (247)



Economics and Marketing

G8.3 Policy : Retain and expand existing job base in downtown by developing strategies that support existing businesses, and by directing specific economic development actions to downtown.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Maximize the potential for business development on Garrison (encourage more second level businesses) through zoning incentives and CBID coordination. (248)
- b. Promote downtown as a location for major employers, retail, entertainment and dining enterprises. (249)
- c. Develop a downtown business-to-business directory. (250)
- d. Foster resource sharing between the University and the medical and business community in creating incubator space and start up support and/or research staffing. (251)
- e. Explore the creation of a Downtown Tax Increment Financing District. (252)
- f. Recruit unique, local service and retail businesses to downtown through incubator spaces and graduated lease agreements. (253)

G8.4 Policy : Concentrate available resources to encourage job creation and population growth in the downtown and riverfront .

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Market existing buildings and infrastructure as assets of the downtown to new and existing businesses seeking to relocate. (254)
- b. Establish partnerships with downtown groups and property owners to seek ways of developing attractive housing for young employees of the companies.(255)
- c. Encourage providers of basic services (groceries, cleaners, drug-stores) to locate downtown. (256)
- d. Extend Kelley Highway west to Clayton Expressway to provide easy access from I-540 to the riverfront and the proposed athletic complex. (257)
- e. Take a strategic approach to create a critical mass of revitalized areas: 1) Convention Center working outward, 2) along Garrison, 3) at either end of downtown as gateway/image anchors, and, 4) adopt a series of districts that are easier to focus on than the downtown as a whole. (258)

Section 5 - Area Planning

G8.5 Policy : Develop and promote niche markets that distinguishes downtown from other retail and entertainment options and reinforces downtown's position as a destination.

G8.6 Policy : Locate cultural activities, entertainment options, service-oriented businesses, and public, private, or institutional programs in downtown.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Develop Convention Center as the nuclei to establish a cultural center in downtown. (259)
- b. Establish a partnership with the University to host and promote arts, cultural, and educational events and opportunities in downtown. (260)
- c. Promote the restoration of the theater and a downtown film festival. (261)
- d. Promote and explore downtown as the arts and cultural center of the Fort Smith region. (262)



Skateboard Park - Downtown Denver

Design and the Look of Fort Smith

G8.7 Policy : Improve the aesthetics of private buildings and public areas in downtown

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Beyond the Historic Urban Design Guidelines, implement a downtown development design code creating a distinct downtown identity. (263)
- b. Establish and promote low-interest loan or grant programs for façade renewal and maintenance for historic buildings. (264)
- c. Complete a historic inventory of downtown buildings and investigate necessary zoning protections. (265)
- d. Prioritize strategic public streetscape enhancements around Convention Center to link with Riverfront and Garrison Street activities. (266)
- e. Modify regulations for the design, use and number of microwave towers downtown. (267)
- f. Maintain the existing overall scale of buildings along Garrison Avenue. (268)
- g. Three to five story structures are appropriate for central downtown districts. (269)
- h. Strengthen building and sidewalk integration with existing parks. (270)
- i. Create CBID design and operation guidelines that stress maintenance, Floor Area Ratio (FAR), ground floor activity, hours of business, and event schedules. (271)
- j. Riverfront - retain and create views of the river. (272)
- k. Gateways - entry and intersection features are needed: Rogers-Towson; Grand Avenue; Garrison Avenue, 11th, and Wheeler. (273)
- l. Require 0.1% of all new construction downtown (over "x" amount) be allotted for exterior public art. (274)



Management and Coordination

G8.8 Policy : Establish full-time CBID marketing and management position in cooperation with city, CBID, Chamber of Commerce and other property and business owners, whose sole task is revitalizing downtown.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

A - Inventory of existing conditions - data and mapping (275)

- Number, type and location of uses
- Hours of operation, high demand times of day/week
- Business revenues, lease rates, ownership patterns
- Number, size and location of vacant ground floor area (pedestrian experience)
- Building conditions, vacant square footage, vacant/underutilized land
- Downtown boundary and linkage refinements

B - Spatial analysis of assets and gaps (276)

- Missing links, appropriate uses, complementary activities
- Target locations and buildings for specific uses
- Coordinated citywide economic development strategy that directs new starts into appropriate downtown spaces

C - Zoning and building regulations review and critique (277)

- current inappropriate uses
- ground floor, storefront and facade standards
- incentives for housing and public amenities

D - Composite downtown Master Plan (278)

- Area designations by use and character
- Circulation plan - pedestrian, bike, bus, car and truck movements

5.2 THE RIVERFRONT

Goal 9: *Regain city access to the Arkansas Riverfront*

Approach: Acquire the necessary property and create specific planning actions to make the riverfront accessible to the citizens of Fort Smith.

As is the case with the downtown element of the plan, the riverfront is broken into two sections: 1) general policies in regard to riverfront development and 2) analysis and recommendations on land use, design, activities and zoning issues.

5.2.1 Policies

G9.1 Policy: Integrate the Arkansas River frontage with new and existing development

G9.2 Policy: Comprehensively plan access and development along Clayton Expressway to reflect passive and active recreation, pedestrian, bicycle and tourist activities.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- | | |
|--|--|
| a. Revise Clayton Expressway classification, prohibiting truck through traffic. (279) | retention of natural vegetation along Clayton Expressway. (280) |
| b. Implement design controls reflecting a parkway or boulevard standard, with limited curb cuts and entrances, and | c. Design direct link, with an extension of Kelley Highway, to Clayton Expressway. (281) |



Marina's



Outdoor cafes

G9.3 Policy: Provide recreation activities and access to the Arkansas River while preserving and protecting the natural environment, watershed and critical wildlife habitats

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Work in cooperation with schools, neighboring jurisdictions and corporate sponsors to develop a regional athletic complex - soft-ball, baseball, soccer. (282)
- b. Adopt development guidelines for the length of the river than maintain the natural shoreline and prohibit filling that displaces woodlands and wetlands. (283)

G9.4 Policy: Integrate unified design and construction standards that complement downtown and city design elements, yet provide a symbol language distinct to the riverfront

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Create and adopt design standards and symbol language to provide a comprehensive park signage system for the length of the city riverfront. (284)

G9.5 Policy: Land development within the river district needs to reflect uses appropriate to the 100-year flood plain and adjacency to the downtown and residential neighborhoods.

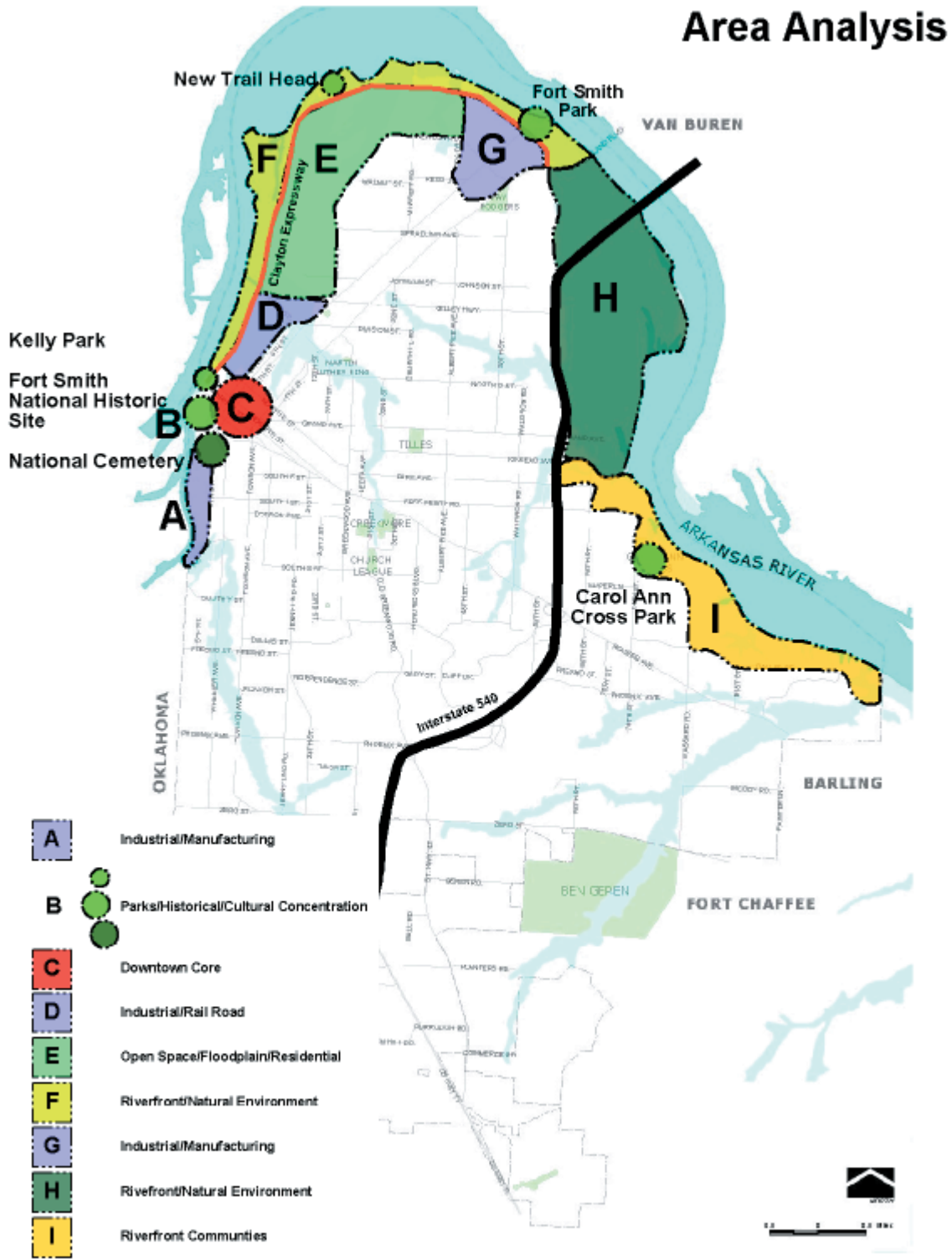


Kelley Park and Amphitheater



View from the levee

5.2.2 Riverfront Framework - Districts



Riverfront Area Analysis

Area A - West, Industrial

While the area will continue to remain an active and viable light industrial and warehousing enclave, opportunities exist to work with property owners to provide access along the riverfront and further connect or expand the citywide bike plan.

Area B - Downtown, Heritage

As a focal point for visitors, it is important that the entrances to these destinations be enhanced and further linked through appropriate wayfinding signage to existing and potential investments in downtown and along the riverfront.

Consolidated downtown and riverfront parking facilities should be located within a few blocks of 1st Street and clear pedestrian paths need to link all facilities with mapped signage and distance markers to all cultural and heritage destinations.

Area C - Downtown, Riverfront

The emphasis within this area is for complementary, transitional development between the downtown core and the riverfront. Defined connections that place ground floor retail, entertainment, eating establishments and pedestrian plazas, in well-designed districts provide the framework for this gateway into the city and downtown.

Area D - Northeast, Downtown

The long-range development of Area D includes phasing out obsolete and incompatible industrial uses in favor of uses complementary to the residential neighborhoods to the south and the proposed entertainment, cultural and recreational activities north along the river. Residential, plaza, retail and recreational uses in a pedestrian oriented environment are appropriate. Support services for uses proposed in Area E would also be appropriate. Any development for this area should provide pedestrian access from the Belle Grove Historic District and surrounding residential neighborhoods, directly to the river and/or trails along Clayton Expressway.

Area E - Clayton Expressway South

Given the area's location within the floodplain, a regional recreational complex is proposed that may include; a state of the art softball and baseball complex, an executive golf course, and soccer and multi-use fields.



Riverfront Area Analysis

Area F - River Frontage

This area would primarily serve as the Riverfront Park with trails linking the cultural/heritage venues in Area B with Fort Smith Park, and further along the Arkansas River. The possibilities of marina development near Area B, hotel, and other development that would enhance the riverfront area near the downtown core were proposed in the Riverfront Master Plan. Clayton Expressway poses many possibilities of creating a parkway or boulevard with bike and pedestrian amenities. An extension of Kelly Highway to Clayton "Parkway" would greatly enhance regional access from Interstate 540 to the riverfront.

Area G - Northside Business and Industrial Park

Beautification along Clayton Expressway would buffer and visually enhance the roadway along these industrial properties. The designation as an industrial park for this area would create a higher amenity environment with complimentary uses, better designed circulation system and a more complete employment environment on 6th Street and Midland Boulevard.

Area H - River East

This area would be difficult to develop, given its location within the floodplain. The riverfront trail system should be extended to Grand Avenue and linked with

the University of Arkansas Class 2 Bikeway South via 74th and Massard Road to Ben Geren. A river educational platform could be created, and mountain bike dirt trails could provide a more challenging, concentrated facility.

While short-term development opportunities are not viable within the existing commercially zoned area just north of I-540, (commercial zoning was established to anticipate the boom in casino development) it may be an appropriate location to eventually accommodate this type of entertainment venue.

Area I - River Residential

This area is predominately built out and should be preserved as riverfront residential. The riverfront trail concept is not viable directly along the river, but opportunities to continue a bike route that links with Carol Ann Cross Park and other stream valley trails connecting with Ben Geren should be pursued. Stream valley preservation and water quality within Area I are a priority.

5.3 CHAFFEE CROSSING - FORT CHAFFEE REUSE PLAN

With the annexation of 6,990 acres of land brought into the city limits, it is more important than ever that this area become a seamless part of Fort Smith and the surrounding communities.

The land use, zoning and design plan for Fort Chaffee is in keeping with the philosophy of the City of Neighborhoods. It proposes walkable neighborhoods that offer a variety of housing, neighborhood and regional commercial centers. A system of parks, greenways and recreational opportunities will be offered, as well as an extension of an extensive bikeway system. The street network promotes connectivity and a hierarchy appropriate for both regional access and local travel. Public architecture, corridor development, gateway features, signage, and new subdivision, building and zoning standards will showcase the "look of

Fort Smith".

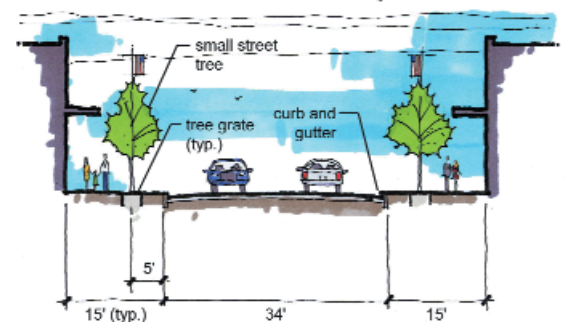
Approximately 1,756 acres of land were requested for various Public Benefit Conveyances (PBC), or general public purposes, as permitted under the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949. These include:

- Expansion of Ben Geren Regional Park and the creation of a nature center (adjacent to Fort Chaffee)
- Expansion of the Fort Smith Regional Landfill (adjacent to Fort Chaffee)
- Right-of-way for the proposed construction of the I-49 Highway
- Acquisition and possible expansion of sewerage lagoons.

A full range of land uses are proposed, with the majority of land planned for residential and open space.

Fort Chaffee Proposed Land Use by Percent

Commercial/Office/Retail	10.6%
Industrial	15.6%
Residential	22.5%
Parks/ Floodplain/Open Space	34.0%
Government/ School/Non-profits	1.3%
Landfill Expansion	5.9%
Roadways	6.4%
Lagoons/ Landfill/ Cemeteries	3.5%
<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>



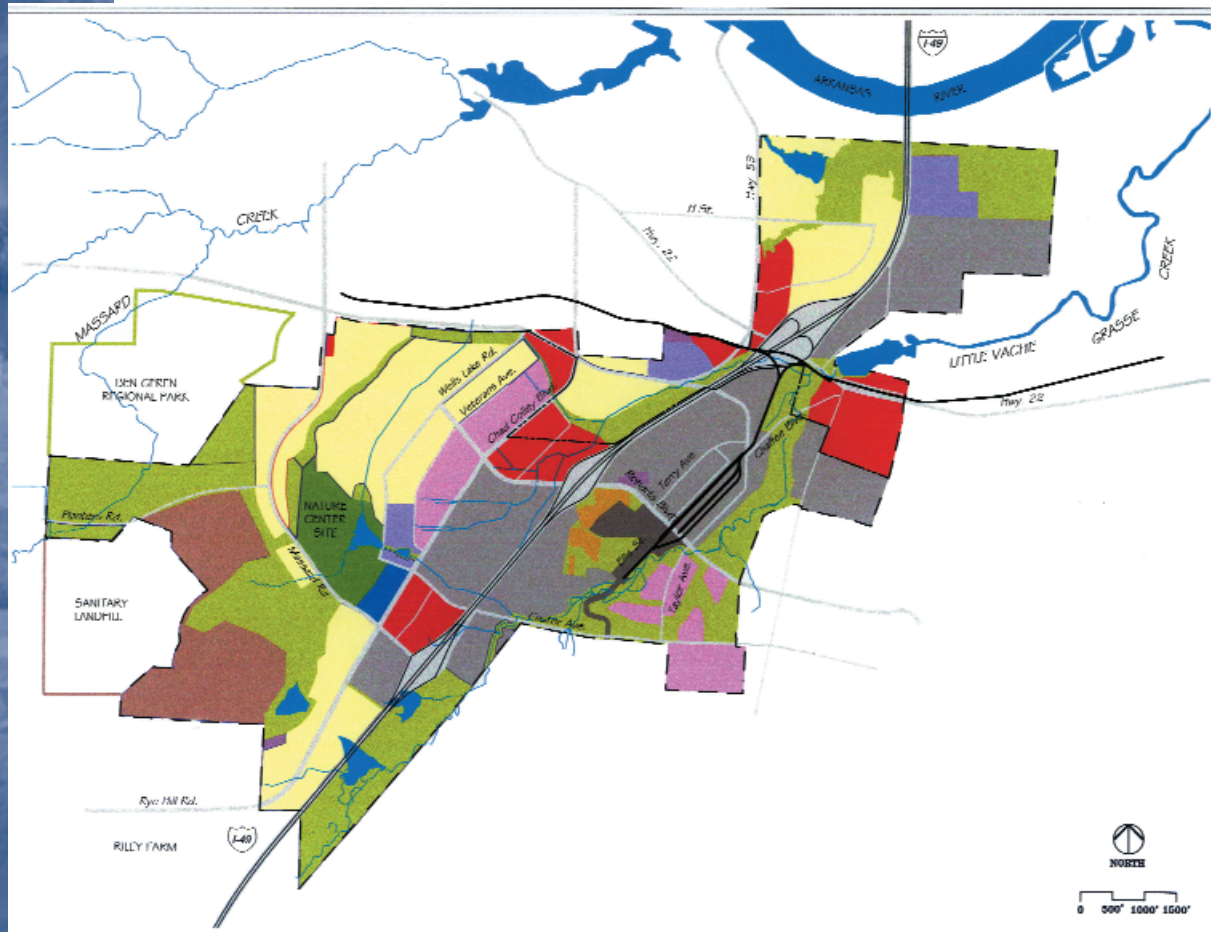
Section 5 - Planning Area

It is projected that by 2015, more than 1800 direct jobs will have been created at Fort Chaffee. While the reuse plan provides for more than 1600 acres of residential land, the constraints that the transfer of land places on the Trust limits the number of housing units that can be built to one (1) house per job created. This policy limits the potential number of housing building permits that can be released to 1800, or for as many jobs that are created and sustained. As many as 125 units on average may be built over this period.

As part of the Fort Chaffee Public Trust obligations, they have adopted a zoning ordinance that designates all land within the Trust as Planned Unit Development, either Planned Residential Development or Planned Commercial Development. A Design Review Committee (DRC) was established to develop and implement the Planned Unit Development (PUD) land use and design regulation for the Fort Chaffee land.

G4.10 Policy: Promote the development of a mix of housing types, including housing affordable to the region's median household income.

Fort Chaffee Land Use and Design



5.4 EXTRA-TERRITORIAL JURISDICTION (ETJ)

Goal: 10: Coordinate and plan future development with neighboring jurisdictions.

Approach: Develop better relationships with neighboring cities, counties and property owners to ensure compatible development patterns, both inside and outside of the city limits, and mitigate or eliminate physical and economic barriers that may create inefficient land use and development patterns.

The City of Neighborhoods calls for reinvestment in the existing city as a priority over expansion. However, the need for residential development is high and Fort Chaffee lands can not solely meet that demand due to constraints on the timing and availability of lands. With the sustained growth in employment, housing and land prices have become over inflated based on supply and demand. Fort Smith housing and land prices are much higher than surrounding areas. There is currently a shortage of land in the city zoned and available for housing. The majority of existing vacant land in the city is zoned for industry, and land outside the city is being held in speculation for business or industry use, or is in limited ownership and not available for development.

A market study conducted for Fort Chaffee (Economic Development Application Conveyance, July 1999) indicated an average absorption of residential land in the region at 2-300 acres of land per year. An estimated 230 new dwellings were constructed in the city between 1990 and 2000. With the city and region pro-

jected to surpass the growth rate of the past decade, pressure for residential growth to the south will continue to be high. A balance is therefore needed between redevelopment of the central city to accommodate new residential development and the orderly support of residential growth within the planning area of the city.

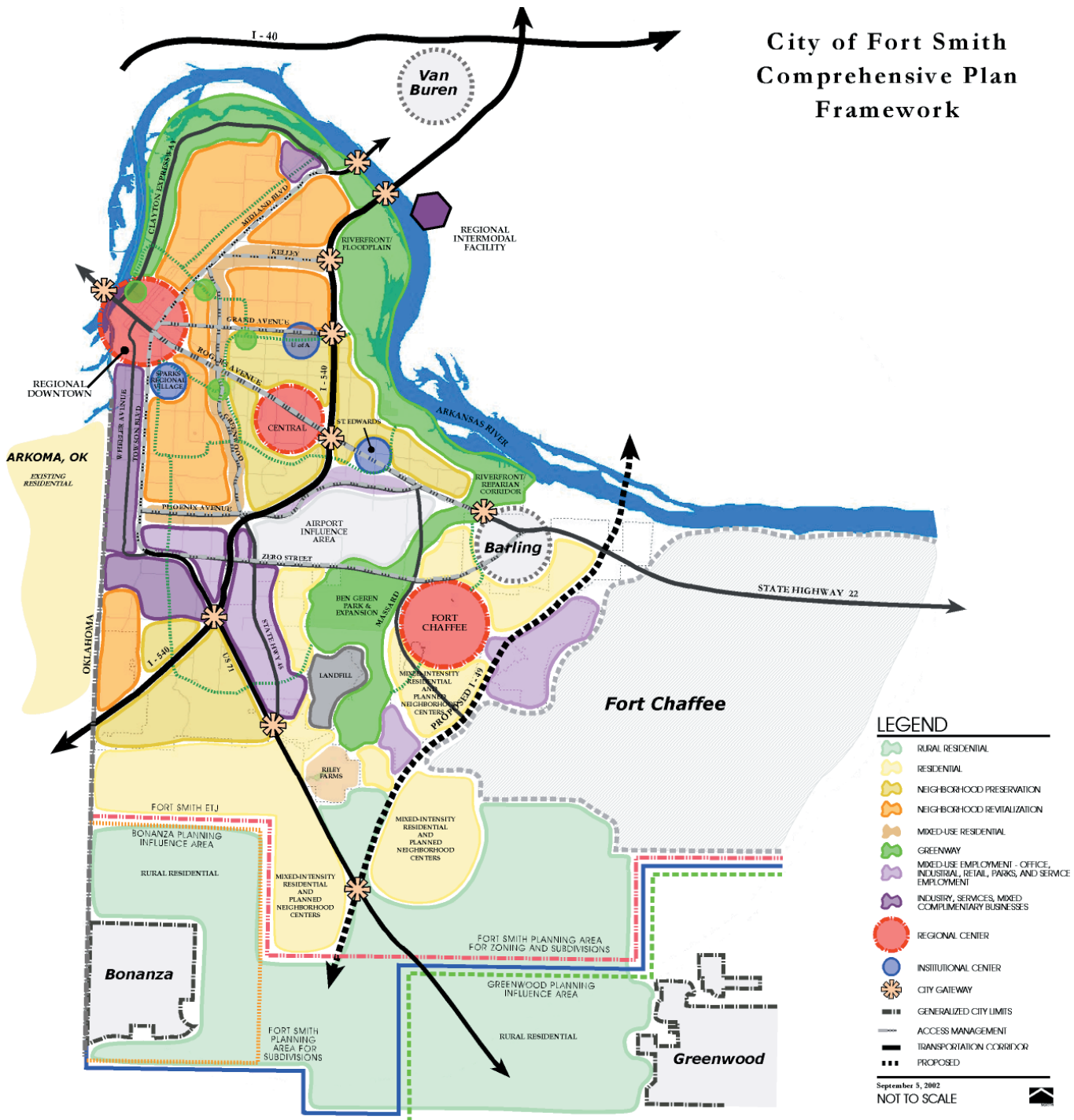
The exercise of ETJ authority is not an ideal situation either for county residents and landowners, or for the city. It is, however, preferable to the current condition of no land use controls, and it may be preferable to landowners to remain in the County as opposed to annexation into the city. Fort Smith should not provide city infrastructure and service provision to lands not annexed to the city, but will undertake to plan for the orderly growth of County lands within its growth area, the ETJ.

“Purpose (of the exercise of extra-territorial jurisdiction): to protect city residents, and existing County landowners from incompatible neighboring uses and insufficient service and infrastructure provision..”

CITY OF NEIGHBORHOODS

WITH ETJ PLANNING

City of Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan Framework



G10.1 Policy: *In recognition of the impacts of un-coordinated growth and development the City of Fort Smith will exercise it's extra-territorial jurisdiction over land in Sebastian County*

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Revise Planning Area Boundary to reflect ETJ - 5 mile Planning Area for subdivision. (285)b. Establish 2 mile ETJ boundary for zoning. (286)c. Include rural and ETJ zone con- | <ul style="list-style-type: none">siderations in Zoning and Subdivision code revisions. (287)d. Establish an oversight committee to review land uses, permits, infrastructure and other issues. Use of established regional planning committees. (288) |
|---|---|

G10.2 Policy: *The City will annex land under any of the following circumstances:*

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The extension of city water/sewer or roads is a requirement for the development of the land;b. A more logical service area boundary would be created;c. The elimination of an existing County "island" would occur;d. A more efficient provision of all | <ul style="list-style-type: none">urban services would be the result;e. Issues of health and safety and general welfare would be addressed; orf. A neutral or positive fiscal impact to the city would result.g. Additionally, the city will seek to address State laws regarding the "surrounding" issue of State Lines. |
|---|--|

G10.3 Policy: *Subdivision of land within the 5-mile ETJ will comply with City subdivision and infrastructure requirements, as amended, to address rural and estate development.*

G10.4 Policy: *The city will take a leadership role in:*

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Working with the County, private developer, land owners and school districts;b. Ensuring consistent and compatible development patterns, both inside and outside the existing city limits; and, | <ul style="list-style-type: none">c. Mitigating or eliminating any physical or economic barrier that may create unsuitable land use and development patterns. |
|---|---|



Section 5 - Planning Area

G10.4 Policy: Protect rural lands from premature growth

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Establish process and agreements with Sebastian County regarding planning and land use issues. (289)
- b. Ensure the participation of existing landowners in the planning process for lands in the ETJ. Assess the possibility of conservation easements and rural cluster zoning to preserve large open land areas, while addressing the regions need for housing. (290)
- c. Establish a good environmental basis for land use and zoning decisions. (291)
- d. Incorporate trail extensions, through stream and ridgelines, to further a regional trail system. (292)
- e. Promote a balance between development and the natural environment, and strive to retain areas of rural character. (293)
- f. Limit the removal of mature trees and grading in keeping with policies for the natural environment. (294)

G10.5 Policy: Ensure adequate, well-maintained infrastructure, public safety and public facilities for all development and prevent development ahead of infrastructure and service provision.

Recommended Actions and Considerations:

- a. Investigate the need for impact fees to fund various infrastructure improvements, in growth areas with CIP funding deficiencies. (295)
- b. Require private funding for any infrastructure built ahead of the CIP schedule. (296)
- c. Promote agreements to share resources in the exercise of governmental powers and functions (parks, schools, libraries, transit, water/sewer, fire/police). (297)
- d. Utilize extraterritorial planning authority, subdivision ordinances, boundary agreements and annexation agreements to meet the mutual goals of neighboring jurisdictions regarding open space, agricultural preservation, growth management and efficient service provision. (298)
- e. Establish infrastructure extension policies that are equitable to those directly affected and to all tax and rate payers. (299)
- f. Do not permit package sewage plants or septic systems where more intense residential development is proposed. (see Section 4.1 for further subdivision guidelines) (300)

G10.6 Policy: The City will consider a variety of options in its exercise of the ETJ, and will propose a long-term growth and development plan that embraces the City of Neighborhoods philosophy while addressing the preferences of existing county residents for a rural lifestyle. This may include exploring the following:

- a. Options that will be considered include; maintaining status quo — rural zoning "O-1" with the plan recommending zone changes; comprehensive re-zoning; and establishing areas of stability and areas of change, with some areas being planned and zoned before others based on this categorization.
- b. Plan for options and contingencies - long term "if...then" scenarios that take into account, for example, the possible construction of major road projects.

ETJ Planning Process:

Planning for the ETJ will follow the same basic process as outlined in Section 4.1 Additional factors and considerations in ETJ

- Section lines
- Geographic physical and perceived boundaries
- Greenwood Planning Area and planning
- Bonanza Planning Area and planning
- County water agreements
- County emergency water supply capability
- County Road Planning
- Sewer treatment capacity and planned extensions (Fort Chaffee planned capacity)
- Existing land uses and environmental and service constraints
- Existing ownership patterns and owner preferences
- School District(s) participation and planning
- Establishing specific phasing or timing of land development by area
- Administering permitting and development approval consistent with other city processes

"Orderly annexations - no 'leap-frog' annexations, plan within 5 mile influence area and work with neighboring small towns and County on orderly, served growth and development."

